

**HOOKED UP ON CATCH 22**  
John Walsh meets Joseph Heller  
MAGAZINE



**SHARE A ROOM WITH A MOVIE STAR**  
The hotel that sells virtual dreams  
TIME OFF, PAGE 3



**THE THINGS WE DO FOR LOVE**  
Ayckbourn takes on the single girl  
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**MURDOCH'S HACKETT OF STEEL**  
The woman at heart of censorship row  
NEWS, PAGE 3



# THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 28 February 1998 70p No 3,546

## Writs fly as Patten book ban throws literary world into turmoil

By Paul McCann and Colin Blackstock

THE LITERARY world was in turmoil last night with authors threatening to walk out on HarperCollins, rival publishers moving in for the kill and writs flying, after claims that Rupert Murdoch intervened to force the company to drop Chris Patten's book.

At least four writers, Fay Weldon, Doris Lessing, Peter Hennessey and Anthony Storr publicly criticised Mr Murdoch, whose company News Corporation owns HarperCollins, and called for a meeting of authors to plan action.

Adding to Harper's troubles were rival publishers who yesterday were ringing around literary agents trying to attract disgruntled writers from HarperCollins' list. At the same time, a writ was lodged in the High Court on behalf of Mr Patten claiming breach of contract against HarperCollins.

Added drama came in a memo that was sent by HarperCollins chairman Eddie Bell to the head of Mr Murdoch's American publishing arm, Anthea Disney, in which he explains how Mr Murdoch felt the book had "negative aspects". The memo also registered concern that the decision to drop the book could threaten the memoirs that Mr Patten's friend John Major is writing for the publisher. The memo also reveals that Mr Bell is concerned that a mysterious "Project Y" might be affected. Project

Y is a sensitive and major book which has just secured a serialisation deal, but its author is known to be "unhappy" about the events at HarperCollins.

Mr Patten last night refused to comment. But his literary agent, Michael Sissons, praised Stuart Proffitt, Mr Patten's editor, who has left HarperCollins after protesting at what he saw as censorship by Mr Murdoch who was trying to protect his business interests in China. Mr Sissons said: "It is now clear that he fought a lone bat-

tle for this book and for his author for many weeks before he was suspended. He must have paid a high personal price for his courage and integrity."

The writ listed the loss of serialisation opportunities with Rupert Murdoch's *Times* and *Sunday Times* as one of his complaints. So far neither newspaper has written about the story.

Last night, News Corporation issued a statement that Mr Murdoch "at no time tried to change" Mr Patten's book.

The former Hong Kong governor was to have been paid £125,000 for the book's publication but he could have at least equalled that in a serialisation deal.

In Mr Bell's memo, he wrote of organising a PR strategy that would accompany a decision to pull the book. This is thought to be the source of a diary item in last week's *Mail on Sunday* which claimed that the book was being "dumped for being too boring".

Bookworm who turned, page 17  
Leading article, page 18

## Equality at last for royal daughters

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

CENTURIES of tradition and heritage were to be overturned by the Queen and Labour Government in a revolutionary move to give daughters equal rights of succession to the throne.

The House of Lords announcement on the modernisation of the monarchy caused near-apoplexy among some Tory peers after a minister said the Queen would not mind such a change - allowing the eldest child of Prince William, daughter or son, to become monarch.

Replying to a Lords Second Reading debate on the Succession to the Crown Bill - backbench legislation proposed by Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare - the Home Office minister, Lord Williams of Mostyn, said: "There can be no real reason for not giving equal treatment to men and women in this respect."

But Lord Williams said a backbench Bill was not an appropriate vehicle for such a constitutionally important measure and he added: "We will be considering how to carry this through within government and in consultation with the Royal Family."

While Lord Archer and his supporters were clearly delighted by the Labour coup, the official Conservative Opposition appeared out-dated and out-flanked. Only this week, William Hague used a major speech on constitutional reform to defend the hereditary peerage, saying: "Our country's greatness is built on generations of in-

heritance of this sort. The inheritance of the throne stands as a symbol of it."

Opening the debate, Lord Archer, said: "Queen Elizabeth II is respected and admired from one side of the globe to the other and the idea that her great granddaughter should not be allowed to ascend the throne ahead of a younger brother is not only farcical but insulting to over half the population of this country."

Delivering the prepared government view, Lord Williams said the Queen had been consulted, and he added: "Her Majesty had no objection to the Government's view that, in determining the line of succession of the throne, daughters and sons should be treated in the same way."

But before he could say any more there was a detonation from Tory peer Lord Marlesford, who protested: "I had always understood that in this House it was not normal to make known the views of the Monarch about legislation before the House."

Lord Williams appeared stunned but replied: "This text has been specifically cleared with those to whom reference has been made. And I therefore resent any suggestion that I have done anything improper."

Last night, Lord Marlesford told *The Independent*: "This is monstrous. The idea that a minister should seek to influence Parliament by conveying the Sovereign's view of legislation being considered by Parliament is an outrage. It is what battles between Parliament and Crown have been fought about for centuries."

## What if Henry VIII had been happy with a daughter ...



... Katharine of Aragon would have stayed his wife and Mary Tudor, their child, would have been the next monarch instead of Edward VI (who would not even have been born). Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard would have kept their heads and we would all still be Roman Catholics

## Para Clegg wins retrial

By David McGivern  
Ireland Correspondent

AN APPEAL court yesterday quashed the conviction of Paratrooper Lee Clegg, whose life sentence for the murder of a Belfast teenage girl has been one of the most controversial Northern Ireland cases of the last decade.

The Northern Ireland Court of Appeal ordered a retrial for the soldier who was convicted of the 1990 killing of 18-year-old Karen Reilly, who was shot dead while in the back seat of a stolen car. The driver, a 17-year-old youth, was also killed in the incident.

The car was hit by 19 bullets, four of which were fired by Private Clegg, after it encountered 16 paratroopers who were engaged in an anti-joyriding patrol. He was convicted of murder in 1993 while five soldiers charged with him were acquitted.

Appeals were turned down by the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal and by the House of Lords. In 1995, however, he was released on licence after an unusually short stay in jail, re-

joining his regiment, gaining promotion to lance-corporal and becoming a PE instructor.

His release led one member of the Life Sentence Review Board to resign in protest, while on the streets of Belfast it sparked off sustained rioting in republican areas.

In January of last year the case was again referred to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal after campaigners produced forensic and ballistic evidence which they described as "absolutely compelling". The campaign on his behalf, led by newspapers, won the support of senior military figures, while a petition for his release attracted two million signatures.

Relatives of the soldier said yesterday they were disappointed that a re-run of the trial would now take place. The family of Karen Reilly called on the British and Irish governments to monitor the re-trial. Her father Sean said: "We are upset at the way Lee Clegg has continued to drag out the legal process to the very limit. As a result, our nightmare at the death of our daughter has continued unabated."

## Miss World is ousted by Mr Gay Universe

By Paul McCann  
Media Correspondent

NO ONE would seriously consider trying to televise Miss World in the Nineties. The future would be deafening. But it is a sign of our times that very few people will bat an eyelid when a gay beauty pageant is televised for the first time in May.

Mr Gay UK, which has been running unseen for five years, is to be televised as a straightforward beauty pageant by Channel 5 in May. The 25 contestants, who include Mr Brighton, will appear in fantasy wear, casual dress and swimwear. If they have a talent they will be encouraged to flaunt it.

The winner gets £5,000 and the opportunity to travel, mainly to Gay Pride events, but travel nevertheless. The holder of the title, Sean McVeigh, is starring in an advertisement for homes in Manchester's gay village.

There will be some differences between this contest and a women's pageant, however, in that rarely did the contestants at Miss World try to flirt with each other: "I think backstage at a women's contest it can get quite competitive and bitchy," says Terry George, creator of the contest.

"But backstage at our do they're actually more into rubbing body oil on each other. It gets quite intimate backstage and we've had a few successful relationships emerge from contestants."

## Oxbridge gets Blair to back down on fees

By Judith Judd  
Education Editor

THE Prime Minister has given into a campaign by the powerful Oxbridge lobby and backed down on cuts in the £35m of extra cash they receive for college fees.

Tony Blair has decided that it was not worth antagonising the powerful and articulate Oxbridge lobby headed by Lord Jenkins, the chancellor of Oxford University, for the sake of £35m paid out annually in student fees to individual colleges.

Mr Blair has also thwarted the efforts of David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, and Tessa Blackstone,

the higher education minister, who wanted the money paid in fees to be conditional on Oxford and Cambridge accepting more state pupils.

But the colleges at the two universities, who use the fees to pay for their libraries and tutorial support for students, have won only a partial victory. A carefully crafted compromise to be announced shortly will leave the present arrangements unchanged for next year (1998/9) and will allow for inflation. After that, the fees will be phased out. Instead, the universities as a whole will receive an unspecified amount of money towards the upkeep of their ancient buildings. They

will also be entitled to bid for money from a new scheme set up by the Higher Education Funding Council, the quango which distributes university funds, which will reward universities where the quality of teaching is high.

Though the money will go to other universities as well as to Oxbridge, the council expects that both universities will do well out of the scheme. They tend to teach students in smaller groups than other universities. Oxbridge colleges have been campaigning to keep the fees which, they argue, are essential if the distinctive nature and tutorial system at the two universities is to be preserved.

### Today's news

#### Mothers' rights

THE rights of working mothers received a substantial boost yesterday when two women won their cases against employers who dismissed them for failing to return to work after maternity leave. Page 7

#### Europe's First XI

EUROPE'S single currency project passed a milestone as 11 of the 12 countries seeking to join in 1999 unveiled statistical proof that they qualify. Single currency champions brushed aside uncertainty, and declared the way clear for the inauguration of an 11-nation euro-zone next January. Page 8



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## Hackette of steel with an eye for the main chance

### IN THE NEWS

#### ANTHEA DISNEY

"THE second this thing came up, I knew instantly that Anthea had her fingers in it and that she would have done the dirty work," one of Anthea Disney's former colleagues at *TV Guide* in New York said yesterday, referring to her apparent role as chief executioner on Chris Patten's book. She's a corporate assassin, the former colleague, who preferred not to be named, continued.

"Her career with Murdoch has been characterised by her being willing to do his dirty work, including firing large numbers of people."

Last year, it was the American authors on the HarperCollins payroll who felt the sharpness of Disney's axe when she cancelled more than 100 titles previously earmarked for publication.

Around 70 were cancelled because the writers had missed their deadlines, and another 30-odd were junked because they were no longer deemed to be commercially worthwhile.

Disney had been appointed a year earlier as chief executive of HarperCollins worldwide with a mission to turn round its ailing fortunes. At that time she had told *The Bookeller*: "In ten or twenty years' time I want authors to say, 'Boy! She really cared about us, about publishing, about the titles.' I do not want them to say, 'Boy! She really cared about the property costs or the budget.'"

In the same interview she also recalled the day Rupert Murdoch had offered her the job. At the time, she was running News Corporation's internet site, *iGuide*. "He said, 'What do you think of HarperCollins?'" she remembered, "and I said, 'I really don't know much about book publishing.'"

Indeed, for most of her working life Disney has been a journalist. In the Seventies she worked for the *Express* and in particular the *Mail*. She was David English's star feature writer, happy to spend a couple of weeks blacked up so she could tell the paper's readers about the coloured experience.

And she was known to be something of an operator, a back who would use all of her wiles to get a story. By the end of the Seventies, Disney was heading up the *Mail*'s New York bureau, but when they decided to post her back to Britain, she preferred to stay and went freelance.

Four years of comparative wilderness

followed, the only blip in a career that has otherwise followed a consistently upward curve.

She eventually got back on track when she joined the *New York Daily News* as features editor, rising to become its Sunday editor. She went on to edit *Self* magazine and there followed a series of further appointments in the Murdoch empire - executive producer of the tabloid TV programme *A Current Affair* and editor of *TV Guide*, America's highest-circulation magazine.

"Tina Brown *avant la lettre*" is how one former colleague describes the success of this Englishwoman in New York (although she's now taken American citizenship). Some say she's jealous of Brown's media profile, but the truth is that she tends to shun glamorous parties, preferring to spend time at her farmhouse home in the company of her husband Peter Howe, a photographer.

They met when she was working on a story about Mexicans in American prisons and he was taking the pictures. "We ended up falling into the same motel room," is how she describes the beginning of their romance. "Utterly unromantic" is how a former journalist colleague describes Disney. "She's calculating. Ruthless is too strong a term, but she does what she says she will do. She's quite formidable and she takes no nonsense."

A Murdoch employee in New York says: "The thing that's crucial to understanding Anthea is that she's a woman with her eye on the main chance. And for her the main chance has been Rupert Murdoch. He's projected her from being just another journalist, albeit a fairly talented one, to being one of the highest-paid women executives in the world."

Tim Hulse



Deadlier than the male: An ex-colleague described Anthea Disney as a 'corporate assassin' Photograph: FSP

#### Vanity, vanity

It's been pointed out by some that Disney's current official photograph differs very little from the one which used to accompany her New York column for the *Daily Mail* in the Seventies. Her detractors use this as evidence of vanity and further like to cite the story of her appearance in *Fortune* magazine in 1996. Apparently so taken was Disney with the accompanying photographs of her in a very fetching leather jacket that her secretary was sent out to buy dozens of copies of the issue.

#### The Ronnie Biggs episode

In 1974, the whole of Fleet Street was struck with frenzy at the news that great train robber Ronnie Biggs might be willing to sell his story. Hacks were despatched forthwith to Brazil in a mad scramble to catch up with him. The *Express* got to him first, splashing with "Train Robber Biggs Captured in Rio... Our Men Are There", but *Mail* editor David English was determined to get Biggs for himself. Disney was one of the *Mail* team who descended on Rio in hot pursuit. In *Skip-Up*, the classic book on this whole sorry affair, author Anthony Delano describes Disney thus: "Small, long dark hair, frequently renovated tan, the kind of look MGM used to fix up for Pocahontas parts." He also describes Disney's modus operandi as she sought to win over a Brazilian police spokesman: "Disney pulled her chair up to his desk, unravelling thighs rounded and browned to the most demanding standards of Copacabana."

#### In her own words

On her appointment as head of HarperCollins: "Here is my opportunity to be distinguished. I am not going to pass on it, I assure you." One year later, following the manuscript massacre: "I'm now seen as a crass barbarian, this woman who walks around with a smile on her face and an axe in her hand."

On her boss: "Rupert never said to me, 'Don't publish anything that has any intellectual value.' It wouldn't make sense. People like to be around books with intellectual content, including owners of publishing houses."

#### The future of publishing Disney-style

"A lot of younger authors might be open to having the community of the Internet collaborate to write books," Disney told *The Bookeller* in 1996. "So you have a book written by a community of people rather than by one person - although one person has to look after the structure and the plot."

#### For the Record

Under Disney's editorship, *TV Guide* became the first billion-dollar-a-year magazine in the American publishing industry.

## Authors line up to defend sacked editor

By Paul Routledge  
Political Correspondent

WRITERS lined up to condemn HarperCollins' treatment of its chief editor Stuart Proffitt yesterday amid signs that some will leave or be tempted by rival publishers who are waiting to pounce.

Fay Weldon called yesterday for a meeting of HarperCollins authors to protest at Proffitt's departure and said she was considering her position: "I suspect that in future if a book is likely to be politically tricky then the author will go to another publisher. I think writers will be a lot more wary of going to HarperCollins. This is certainly not going to make things easy for them or the people who work there."

She added: "What upsets me is that the idea that writers can be insulted as a way out for the bosses. I can understand the book being stopped for political reasons, and that happens, but when the reason given is that it's not of sufficient quality then that's insulting to the writer and upsetting. I think it is very upsetting to suggest that Chris Patten's work is not up to standard."

Weldon was joined by Doris Lessing who told *The Independent*: "These big robber barons who make empires out of publishing treat their editors like dirt. I've been so shocked by it. It's unheard of this hap-



Fay Weldon: 'Writers will now be wary of going to HarperCollins'

pening in a serious publishing house of intellect and merit and now suddenly we find it happening. Mr Murdoch couldn't care less about his authors."

Historian Peter Hennessey has already written to Mr Proffitt to tell him that he will be moving to wherever he goes: "If he can take his authors with him, then I'll go. The relationship between an author and their editor is a most special one. It's the reason we go to publishers. I think that a

lot of his authors will go with him if they can."

Meanwhile rival publishers have already started contacting the agents of disgruntled writers: "Of course we will take advantage of it," said Martin Neil, managing director of Hodder & Staughton. "We're not quite drawing up a hit list, but there are a number of writers we are interested in. What happens in a situation like this is a general climate of uncertainty."

HarperCollins refused to comment on the story, but insiders said they were feeling rattled: "There is stunned disbelief here. I cannot recall this type of interference before. I should imagine editors will have some interesting questions to field from authors."

"If an author doesn't want to remain with a publishing house there is not a lot a publisher can do about it," said the insider. "You cannot force them to write for you and imagine the publicity if they start claiming they are being held against their will."

To add to that uncertainty it emerged yesterday that Stuart Proffitt's deputy Toby Munday is also leaving the company. "This is fantastically damaging," said one publishing source. "They do a lot of political biographies. Now agents and authors will feel unnerved in case staying with HarperCollins will taint their work."

## German driving force for 'curvy' new Rolls-Royce

ROLLS-ROYCE yesterday gave full details of its new £155,000 "curvy" model, which will be powered by a German engine. The Silver Seraph, the carmaker's first all-new model for nearly two decades, will have 5.4-litre V12 engines from BMW, which is keen to acquire the up-for-sale company.

The more rounded contours of the car, built at Rolls's headquarters in Crewe, Cheshire, will be unveiled for the first time

at next week's Geneva Motor Show.

Capable of accelerating from 0-60mph in just under seven seconds, the Seraph will go on sale straight after its world debut on Tuesday.

The car has new seats, new braking, a new heating system and more luggage space. "This is the dawn of a new era for Rolls-Royce and we approach the millennium in confident mood," said the company's



The Silver Seraph, powered by a V12 BMW engine, will go on sale immediately after its launch on Tuesday

chief executive, Graham Morris today. The Seraph is the first product to come out of the company's £40m investment in new facilities at Crewe. For the first time, cars at Crewe come off assembly lines and robots are

also used in the production process. But the production line moves somewhat slower than those at other car plants - going at just 0.01mph, so that it takes a car 20 hours to reach the end of the line.

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A. One scr... customers while the other scr... competitors.

(Mr) G D Shattack,  
Peterborough

Dear easyJet

My daddy is always meaning about the big business forcing the little man out of business. My daddy lost his business three years ago and he was very sad.

He says that BA behave unfairly and he calls them names. He says I should write to you with my support. He has told me about Freddie Laker, Virgin and now easyJet.

I will tell my teacher and friends about it as well.

Good luck.

Rosanna

Rosanna Johnstone (age 8) Culcheth

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DEPT.

BA  
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DEPT.



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ON YOUR PROMOTION!

Bill Tidy

The Ballad of Ayling Bob

Fares high,  
Market slipping,  
Career awry  
Profits dipping.

Move to 'Go',  
Pies in skies,  
Stoop real low,  
Cross-subsidise.

Rivals go,  
Sold a pup,  
Status quo,  
Fares go up!

Peter Scott-Smith  
Bury St. Edmunds

Why call an airline GO?

When its the others you are trying to stop  
Its good old BA and Co  
Trying to keep themselves on top.

They called their airline GO  
Its a trick. The most sleazy yet.  
Would I fly with GO?  
No. I'll use easyJet!

John Jenkins  
East Lothian

Doesn't it get on your pip  
someone should give their wings a clip,  
It really isn't very fair  
that B.A. think they own the air!

First they target Freddie Laker  
then it was Branson some years later,  
Anyone gets in their way  
They say: "There's only room for us. B.A"!

Well listen here... you won't succeed  
by making competition bleed,  
remember David and his sling  
he slayed Goliath and became a king.

Soon all will change, oh yes indeed  
when easyJet and their like succeed,  
B.A. will suffer a mighty blow  
as we passengers turn away from "Go".

Stephen Benson  
Blandford, Dorset

Thank you all for your continued support in easyJet's battle against the new BA cheap trick, and for the thousands of faxes we received in response to our Beauty and the Beast campaign.

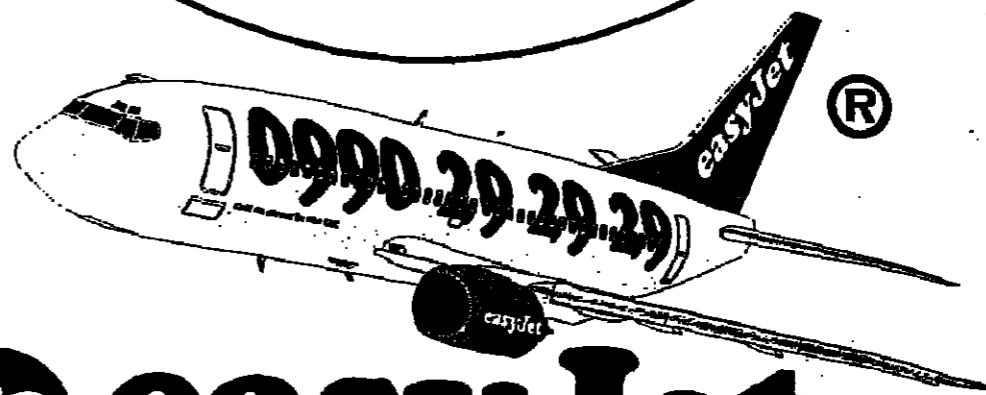
The ad invited readers to fax their views about BA's latest "cheap trick" airline "go". Here are six of the best responses, who each win a pair of free flights on easyJet. Congratulations to the other four prize winners (J D Statham, G Ferguson, R L Cole, J Harry), and we're sorry their entries did not fit on this page.

easyJet are determined to fight the BA cheap trick all the way to the High Court and beyond if necessary. A writ was served on British Airways by easyJet on Thursday 26th February 1998. For the full text please refer to our website [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com).

In our efforts to prove the cross subsidy of 'go' by BA, we need all the help we can get. If you have evidence of such behaviour by BA or any other 'BA trick' please fax us on 01582 - 445588 (strict confidence guaranteed for BA staff)

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هنا من الاصل

# Journalist's family applauds verdict of unlawful killing

By Ian Burrell

**FIGHT** years after his body was found hanging from a cupboard in a Chilean hotel room, a British inquest finally returned a verdict of unlawful killing yesterday on the death of Jonathan Moyle.

The 28-year-old defence journalist died while investigating the sale of attack helicopters to Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime.

The verdict was returned by the Exeter and East Devon coroner after a two-hour hearing at Exmouth Coroner's Court.

Afterwards, Mr Moyle's family, who have never stopped investigating the circumstances surrounding his death, said that some justice had been done.

His mother Diana said: "It would have been so immensely unfair if any other verdict had been returned. It has been a long time, eight years, and it has been hanging over us every day. I just feel relieved."

When the body of the former RAF helicopter pilot was discovered hanging in a 5ft high wardrobe in a Santiago hotel room, the Chilean authorities said he had committed suicide.

Eight months later, an inquest was opened near Mr Moyle's home in Devon. But the coroner was forced to adjourn the hearing after a pathologist



Moyle: arms dealer link

doen had earned millions from Iraq's protracted war with Iran and was also linked to the deals by which British engineering company Matrix Churchill supplied lathes to manufacture Iraqi munitions.

Mr Moyle had arrived in Santiago as a delegate at an international defence conference.

He began investigating claims that Mr Cardoen was preparing to convert the Bell 206 civilian helicopter into an attack aircraft carrying a guided missile system, which was jointly manufactured in Britain, Sweden and the US.

Mr Moyle senior has since spent £10,000 investigating his son's death. His concerns helped prompt a re-think by the Chilean authorities and a judicial investigation in Santiago in September 1991 concluded that the young Briton had been murdered and that his killers had faked his suicide. Two years later, when an identity parade in Chile failed to identify a suspect, the murder hunt was halted.

But the investigation into his death was re-opened by the Santiago Court of Appeal late last year.

Nearly eight years on and just as Britain has narrowly avoided going back to war with Iraq, the Moyle family finally feels that the authorities have done them some justice.

said that vital body organs were missing.

The inquest was finally re-opened yesterday after further investigations by the authorities in Chile and by Mr Moyle's father Tony. A retired school teacher, Mr Moyle became convinced that his son was killed after being given a sedative in his coffee.

When the body was discovered on 31 March, 1990, the Foreign Office at first accepted the Chilean authorities' view that he had committed suicide.

But it later emerged that Mr Moyle had been working on a story that Carlos Cardoen, a wealthy Chilean arms dealer, had brokered a deal to supply Iraq with helicopters equipped with guided missiles. Mr Car-

## Irvine pledges new curbs on chequebook journalism

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

**CHEQUEBOOK** journalism payments to court witnesses are to be outlawed, Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, announced yesterday.

He said in a Lords written reply that the Government had accepted an all-party select committee call for payments to witnesses and pre-trial publicity to be controlled by legislation.

Concern over the issue came to a head during the trial of mass murderer Rose West when a number of witnesses were "bought up" by newspapers.

Lord Irvine said: "The Government is committed to main-

taining an appropriate balance between the due administration of justice on the one hand and freedom of speech on the other. It has concluded that the committee's recommendations maintain that balance and has therefore accepted them in principle."

"Media coverage of the trial itself will be unaffected," he said. "But payments to witnesses, or potential witnesses, by the media run a real risk of encouraging witnesses to exaggerate their evidence to make it more newsworthy, or to withhold relevant evidence from the court and make it available as an exclusive to a newspaper. If the existence of a media

contract emerges in court, juries may wonder if the witness's evidence has been affected by the contract. This may not be the case, but suspicion that it is could be enough to cause a miscarriage of justice."

The select committee report also called for strengthening of the Contempt of Court Act 1981, "so that it covers the collective or cumulative effect of pre-trial publicity in risking prejudicing a trial, as well as the effect of individual articles". Lord Irvine said: "This means that newspapers could not escape liability, as one case held they could, because a number of them had acted in a similar way and together had caused the prejudice."

## Thinking of buying a computer?

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## Food labels to help fight flab

By Glenda Cooper  
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

**NEW** labelling guidelines to help consumers work out the fat and calorie content of food were being published yesterday.

The Institute of Grocery Distribution, which issued the guidelines, said fat and calories were shoppers' biggest concerns and manufacturers were being urged to print "guideline daily amounts" on packets to make it simpler for people to work out whether they are eating too much.

Manufacturers and retailers are also being urged to break down the fat and calorie content per serving. The institute wants labels to include the information that on average women eat 2,000 calories and 70g of fat while for men the values are 2,500 calories and 95g of fat. The guidelines are based on recommendations from health professionals and government advisers.

Joanne Denney, chief executive of the institute, said the advice was intended to be both beneficial and practical.

Calorie control: The new guidelines aim to help people keep track better of their food intake

Photograph: BBC

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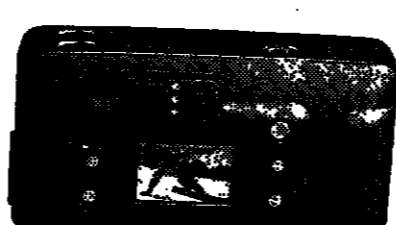
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## Best of British heritage goes online



Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, in Swindon yesterday to begin putting pictures from the National Monuments Record on to the World Wide Web. He was helped by Oliver Dhillon, II, (centre), Natalie Ferris, II, (right) and Laura Edwards, also II, who along with children from all over the country will be able to access the images from RM's Living Library, an Internet service for schools. Right, a photograph of house in Buckinghamshire taken in 1900 which Mr Smith scanned in

©Calix Multimedia/Photograph: Darren Jack



## 'Miserly' French are accused on cup tickets

By Kim Sengupta and Jason Bennett

ARGUMENTS over the allocation of World Cup tickets to fans of England, Scotland and other countries dominated an international security summit for the competition held yesterday by Jack Straw, Home Secretary.

The seminar, in his Blackburn constituency, was used by Tony Banks, Minister of Sports, to register anger at the "miserly" attitude of the French hosts, and to warn they could weaken security arrangements.

At the same time 22 Liberal Democrat MPs signed a motion condemning the French ticketing authorities, claiming what they had done is "in breach of the single market regulations and completely disregards the instructions issued by the European Commission".

The moves came after the Football Association learned with "astonishment and dismay" that England fans had been allocated fewer than 10,000 tickets for the opening games. Only 2,500 tickets will be available for the fans to see the match with Colombia in Lens, near Lille, on 26 June.

"This is making something of a mockery of a great footballing festival," Mr Banks said. "This seminar is all about security and this ticket issue will come up in quite a big way. Ticketing and security are very closely linked. I will make sure the feelings of the football supporters, the Government and

the FA are made quite clear." Mr Straw said of the allocations: "There is obvious and understandable concern by many of the nations participating in the World Cup about their ticket allocations", and added that discussions were continuing.

Police and football chiefs from 22 countries including Dominique Spinosi, security director of the French World Cup organisers, and George Querry, the senior French police officer involved, attended yesterday's summit. Mr Straw said: "We are having discussion with them, but they have to work within a framework established by Fifa, and there is an enormous demand."

To counter the threat of violence by fans the Home Office proposed that people convicted of football-related offences in France be banned from travelling to any other matches in the World Cup tournament.

There are already similar agreements with six other European countries. They enable British courts to make offenders report to police stations at match times. Mr Straw wrote to courts and prosecutors before Christmas urging them to use the powers more often. The number of people effectively banned from travelling on certain days has since increased from about 10 to 34.

Mr Straw wants fans to inform on hooligans by contacting a "hooligans hotline" re-launched by the National Crime Intelligence Service. The number is 0800 515495.

## Ex-rugby star jailed for fraud

A former British Lion was jailed for five years after he admitted plundering the trust fund of the man he once regarded as a mentor. Tony Neary, one of the golden boys of rugby union's amateur era, admitted 12 charges of theft totalling more than £288,000.

Two further charges of fraud, totalling £240,000, were denied by Neary, formerly of Alderley Edge, Cheshire, and were allowed to stay on the records. Liverpool Crown Court heard how the theft be-

tween December 1991 to November 1992 related to two funds set up by the late Manchester lawyer John Gornall, for whom Neary had worked.

The court was told how Neary, 49, a solicitor, had once stood on top of the world but had since divorced and was now bankrupt.

Sentencing Neary, who was 43 caps for England, David Clarke, QC, Recorder of Liverpool, said: "You have to be sentenced for the offences which you committed."

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# Victory for women sacked after maternity leave



Winning combination: Heather Crees (left) and Janet Greaves after their victory at the Court of Appeal yesterday Photograph: Sam Pearce/PA

By Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

THE RIGHTS of working mothers received a substantial boost yesterday when two women won their cases against employers who dismissed them for failing to return to work after maternity leave.

One of the women, Heather Crees, who worked for a large insurance company, yesterday told how she suffered from post-natal depression and had delayed her return in order to care for her premature baby who was suffering from severe medical problems.

Government figures show that thousands of mothers—around one in 20—are unable to start back at work on time either because they are sick themselves or their babies need extra care.

The Royal London Mutual Insurance Society and Kwiksave Stores, the two employers concerned, were, however, given leave to appeal to the House of Lords so that the law could be "clarified".

The Court of Appeal yesterday decided that Janet Greaves, 36, who was employed as an assistant su-

permarket manager at Kwiksave and Mrs Crees, 42, formerly a clerk at Royal London had been unfairly dismissed.

Mrs Crees lost her home partly as a consequence of her dismissal and now lives in a caravan. She said her husband was forced to leave work to look after her and their son.

Mrs Crees, of Clacton, Essex, was sacked after sending a note explaining her illness to her employers. Mrs Greaves of Giles Gate, Durham, was dismissed after returning to work and handing in her explanation personally. Both companies claim that under employment law, the women had sacked themselves because they had not been "ready for work" on the first day after their maternity leave.

A spokeswoman for the Maternity Alliance said post-natal depression was a major problem for women and the Court of Appeal decision would have a significant impact. "We have to tell hundreds of women who call us every month to drag themselves into or risk losing their job."

Giving the ruling, Lord Justice Mummery, concluded that Parli-

ment never intended that a scheme to protect female workers would allow companies to "take advantage of the temporary illness of a female employee to deny her the statutory right to return to work". Such an interpretation by employers would be "absurd and unjust".

He said the laws were "complex" and tried to strike a balance between protection of women at a time when they were "physically and emotionally vulnerable" and the business of an employer.

Urging the court to give leave for appeal to the Law Lords, Elizabeth Slade QC, representing the insurance company, said it was of "extreme importance" that the law should be clarified.

The MSF white-collar union and Usdaw, the shopworkers' union, which backed the two women's case, last night expressed confidence that the Law Lords would endorse the decision of the Court of Appeal.

John Monks, TUC general secretary, said the victory had great significance for all women workers who were treated unfairly when they became pregnant.

## Past trauma brings fear to dentist's chair

By Jeremy Laurance  
Health Editor

DENTAL phobia has nothing to do with going to the dentist. It is triggered by other traumatic experiences which become accidentally associated with the dental surgery, according to a study published in the *British Dental Journal* this week.

One in ten people has a phobia of the dentist and studies stretching back 70 years show that the level is unchanged since the days of treatment with pliers and oil of cloves. Despite huge advances in techniques and anaesthetics which have rendered dentistry an almost painless affair, the same proportion of patients today as in the Thirties suffer such intense anxiety they avoid treatment.

Dr Ruth Freeman, of Queens University Dental School, Belfast, who wrote the article, says that if dental phobia were related to previous painful experiences in the dentist's chair its incidence ought to have fallen as techniques improved. That it hasn't suggests that dental phobia in both adults and children arises when anxiety is transferred onto dentistry from experiences outside.

A five-year-old child became distressed during a visit to the dentist because the white coat worn by the dentist re-

minded him of the hospital where his twin brother died. His mother had told him that angels had come to the hospital to take his brother to heaven. When he saw the dentist's white coat he thought the angels had come to take him to heaven.

In a second case, a 23-year-old woman associated a childhood accident in which she fell off a swing damaging her teeth with the beatings that her alcoholic father meted out to her mother. She had a general anaesthetic to extract the damaged tooth and remembered waking with blood on her lips and in her mouth—just like the blood she had seen on her mother's mouth.

Dr Freeman said: "Dental phobia may remain at a similar level in the future because life experiences will always influence a person's feelings about going to the dentist. However, there are techniques which can help them overcome their anxiety."

Psychologists use behaviour therapy and relaxation techniques to help people who are too afraid to visit the dentist to become accustomed to the sights, sounds and other experiences associated with treatment. Those who can visit a dental practice can be given sedation, advised about pain control and how to stop treatment with a signal.

## Paraplegic loses £1m claim

A MAN left paralysed after falling off a bar stool while drunk lost his £1m damages claim in the High Court in Belfast yesterday.

Rachelor William Joy, 37, of Cookstown, Co Tyrone, had downed 13 vodkas and four pints of beer when he fell off his stool and broke his neck in the Copper Room bar in Cookstown in 1989. Mr Justice Campbell said there was no breach of duty of care on the part of the pubman, Michael Newell. Mr Joy claimed the landlord was negligent in allowing him to sit on the stool while intoxicated. Described as a virtual paraplegic, Mr Joy was not in court because his wheelchair had broken, relatives said.

## £100m for Millennium Festival

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday announced plans for a nationwide Millennium Festival to be funded with £100m of National Lottery funds.

The move follows criticism that current plans for the year 2000 are dominated by the Dome in Greenwich, south-east London. Groups will now be able to apply for grants of less than £5,000 or larger sums to fund major events. Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced the plans in Bristol, where he is on the first stage of a nationwide roadshow aimed at highlighting existing regional events and projects.

## Tribute concert for Diana

SIR CLIFF RICHARD and Chris de Burgh will be among stars performing at a tribute concert for Diana, Princess of Wales, in June, it was announced yesterday. Other performers taking part in the show on 27 June at Althorp, near Northampton, include Wet Wet Wet, Lesley Garrett, Julian Lloyd Webber and Jimmy Nail. Tickets will cost £39.50 and go on sale today. Details of the concert were given by Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, who owns the Spencer estate at Althorp, where the Princess is buried.

## Fraud squad to question MP

OFFICERS from the fraud squad are set to interview a Labour MP over allegations about election expenses. The officers, from Nottinghamshire Police, will question Fiona Jones, MP for Newark, following the launch in December last year of an investigation into her general-election expenses. "Officers still have to interview additional people, including the MP, and it is hoped that the inquiry will be concluded soon so that a report can be submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service," a police spokesman said.

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# Lockerbie relatives welcome trial progress

BRITISH relatives of those killed in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing yesterday welcomed a ruling which could lead the way to the trial of the two Libyans accused of the murders.

At a hearing in The Hague, the judges at the World Court, the United Nation's highest judicial authority, ruled that it had the right to settle the deadlock between the United States, Britain and Libya over where the trial should be held.

Libya says it will not release

the two suspects for trial in Britain or the US claiming they will not get a fair trial. A total of 270 people died when a bomb exploded on Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie in Scotland on 21 December 1988.

To the frustration of many relatives, Britain and the US have repeatedly insisted that the accused men, Abdel Basset Mohammed Al-Megrahi and Al-Amin Khalifa Fhima, must be tried either in Scotland or the US.

Yesterday Jane Swire, from

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, who lost her daughter Flora in the bombing, said she hoped it would be "the first step towards our goal of truth and justice."

Mrs Swire, whose husband Jim travelled to The Hague for the ruling, said: "If it will expedite a trial on a neutral country basis - which is what we want, I think it will be a good thing."

"I hope this will now mean there will be a trial in a neutral country, and I hope it will not take too long. The legal wheels

seem to turn very slowly, and I hope they will turn a little more quickly. It is now nearly 10 years since that awful crime."

Dr Swire, who is involved in the campaign for a trial on a neutral country and has worked as spokesman for the British families who lost relatives in the bombing, welcomed the court's decision. "I feel, probably unjustifiably, over the moon about it, very elated. To hear a learned court of this sort look at something so objectively and inde-

pendently of the relative power of the two sides represented, it's really very refreshing," he said.

He agreed with the Libyan government on having a trial in a neutral country, even though "for all I know the Libyan government may well have played a part in murdering my daughter", he said. Libya did not trust the jury system and UN inspectors called in to examine the Scottish judicial system in December had expressed "very severe reservations" about it, Dr

Swire said, adding: "They said the Scottish judiciary depends on the jurors entering the jury box with no preconceived ideas or knowledge of the case they are to try."

He did not think it possible to find a jury without "many preconceived notions" about the disaster. "We want truth and justice," he told BBC Radio 4's *The World at One* programme.

"It isn't just about the question of who killed our loved ones but also why they weren't pre-

vented from doing it. There are a multitude of unanswered questions about the performance of British aviation security and intelligence which remain unanswered."

Responding to the ruling, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said: "This is neither a victory nor a defeat. The court has decided that it wishes to consider these complex issues in more detail at a full hearing. Meanwhile, the Resolutions of the United Nations Security Coun-

cil stand: Libya must surrender those accused of the Lockerbie bombing for trial in Scotland or the United States."

The Labour MP Tam Dalyell, who supports the calls for a trial in a neutral country, also hailed the ruling, saying: "I will attempt to raise the court ruling in the House of Commons on Monday urging that the British and American governments agree with the judges that a trial should be held in a third country, preferably the Netherlands."

## Winter bows out with a cold snap

By Nicholas Schoon  
Environment Correspondent

AN UNUSUALLY mild winter officially ends today with freezing gales, a nasty cold snap and a real threat of snow in the north as Spring, and March, arrive.

Gales blasted cold air into Scotland and northern England yesterday, blowing over lorries and killing one driver on the A1 near Morpeth, Northumberland. Two dozen pupils in West Leeds High School suffered minor injuries after the roof was blown off their classrooms.

At nearby Leeds Bradford airport a 35-seat passenger aircraft was blown right off the runway by a violent crosswind during its take-off run. The British Midland Saab 340 bounced across the grass and ended up more than 100 yards from the concrete, facing in the wrong direction. None of the 15 passengers and three crew, bound for Glasgow, were hurt.

The Meteorological Office counts winter as December, January and February. With one day of data collection remaining, the average temperature for the past three months was 6C, nearly 2C above the long-term winter average. It

looked set to be the warmest since the winter of 1989/90, and one of the ten hottest in more than 300 years.

February has been balmy still, fully 3.5C above the long-term average for the month. Weathermen said it looked likely to be as warm as February 1990, which was itself the mildest since the same month in 1869.

The past month has also been unusually dry in England and Wales, with only a quarter of average rainfall. Water companies were hoping the drought was over following a wet November, December and January; now they are pinning their hopes on a return to average rainfall during the next two months.

Anglian Water has announced that it is setting up the first desalination plant on mainland Britain next week. The small research plant will begin taking in seawater at Felixstowe, converting it into 40 cubic metres of freshwater a day. But because this is only a three-month trial of membrane technology, this freshwater will be poured back into the sea. Anglian says it will consider a "more permanent" desalination plant for the area if the pilot project proves successful.



Sweet something: Annika, aged one, samples one of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's 'candy spills', to be auctioned by Christie's Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

## Man shot dead had replica weapon

A GUN being brandished by a burglar who was shot when he pointed the weapon at a police marksman was a replica, it emerged yesterday.

The man, believed to be in his 30s, was seen on Thursday hanging out of a first-floor window in a block of flats in Clarendon Street, Bedford, shouting threats at police and taking aim with what turned out to be a replica Colt .45 automatic pistol. He died of a single gunshot wound to his chest.

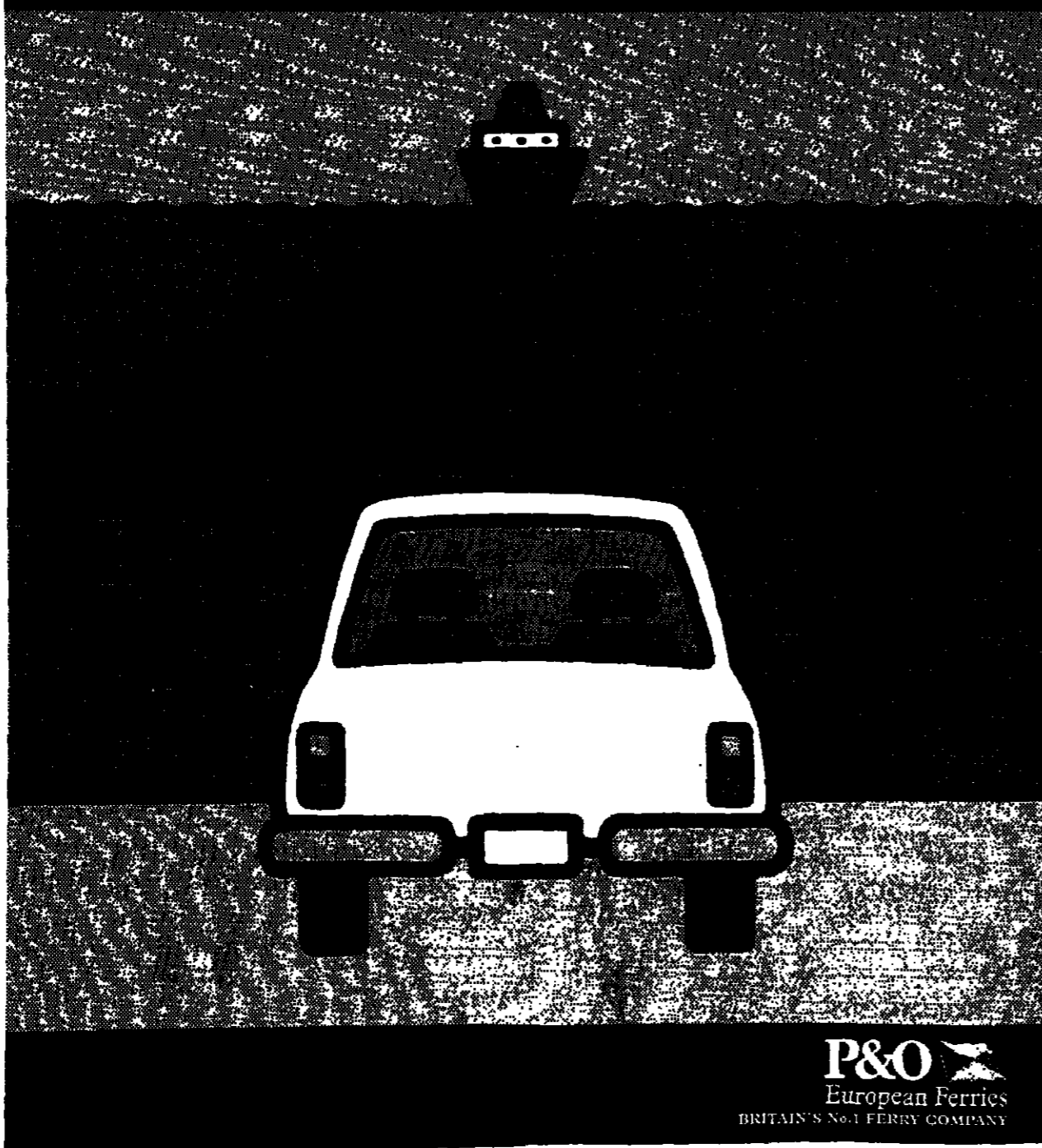
Bedfordshire Police said the marksman who shot the man - and who had more than five years' experience in the firearms squad - was taken off firearms duty after the incident, but was not suspended.

Bedfordshire assistant chief constable Anthony Howlett-Bolton said: "We regret this has happened but we must warn people that replica firearms have to be treated as real. [The incident is a sad reflection of what can happen.]"

A police spokesman said it was the first time in more than 20 years that a Bedfordshire firearms officer had opened fire during an incident. An investigation - said to be standard procedure - is under way.

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Paying homage: Visitors holding incense sticks pray before a statue of Buddha in a prayer hall at the Lama Temple in Peking on Tibetan New Year's Day. Many Chinese visit the best-known Tibetan Buddhist temple in China, outside of Tibet, to pray for good fortune in the coming year. Photograph: AP

## Wallis's aide says sale was 'spiritual rape'

By John Lichfield  
in Paris

THE sale of the personal possessions of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor amounted to "physical, mental and spiritual rape", the Duchess's long-time private secretary said yesterday.

Janine Metz accused Mohamed Al Fayed, who organised the \$20m (£12.5m) sale at Sotheby's in New York, of reneging on repeated promises to turn the Windsors' former Paris home into a museum.

She said the French state should have stepped in to prevent the collection of the Windsors' most personal possessions and memorabilia from leaving France. "I counted on Mohamed Al Fayed's assurances that he would preserve the Windsor residence as a shrine, a place consecrated to the memory of the Duke and Duchess," she told the newspaper *Le Figaro*. "All at once, that's out of the question: everything, from the most royal object to the most intimate, was going on to the sales block."

Ms Metz said Mr Fayed had



Duchess of Windsor: Sale of her personal effects

\$13,000. "How could the French state allow the dispersal of what should have remained under the protection of a museum? Did no one care that this was the residence of a former king?"

Mr Fayed acquired the lease of the Windsors' former villa in the Bois de Boulogne from the City of Paris in 1986. He said originally that he intended to turn the home into a museum.

He bought many other items from the Pasteur Institute, to which the Duchess left the bulk of her possessions when she died.

The millionaire owner of Harrods, the Ritz hotel in Paris and Fulham Football Club now plans to turn the Windsor villa into a private home.

The proceeds of the New York sale will go, he says, to create a Fayed foundation, which will perform charitable works in the name of his son, Dodi, and Diana, Princess of Wales.

The couple visited the Windsor villa the day before their fatal car accident in Paris six months ago: there has been speculation that they intended to get married and live there.

## St Petersburg burial for Tsar

THE Russian government recommended yesterday that the remains of Russia's last Tsar, Nicholas II, and his family should finally be buried on 17 July in the church of St Peter-Paul in St Petersburg, the last resting place of their imperial ancestors, writes Helen Womack in Moscow.

President Boris Yeltsin will

have the final say, but experts think it unlikely he will overrule his cabinet, which made the decision after a three-hour long meeting - a move that will displace Eduard Rossel, governor of Yekaterinburg, where the Tsar and his family were executed in 1918, who had wanted them to be buried in his city.

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£25,000 - £49,999	6.05%	4.84%
£10,000 - £24,999	5.55%	4.44%
£5,000 - £ 9,999	5.05%	4.04%
£500 - £ 4,999	4.55%	3.64%
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£10,000 - £24,999	4.70%	3.76%
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£2,500 - £ 4,999	4.10%	3.28%
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£10,000 - £24,999	7.30%	5.84%
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£2,000 - £ 4,999	5.90%	4.72%
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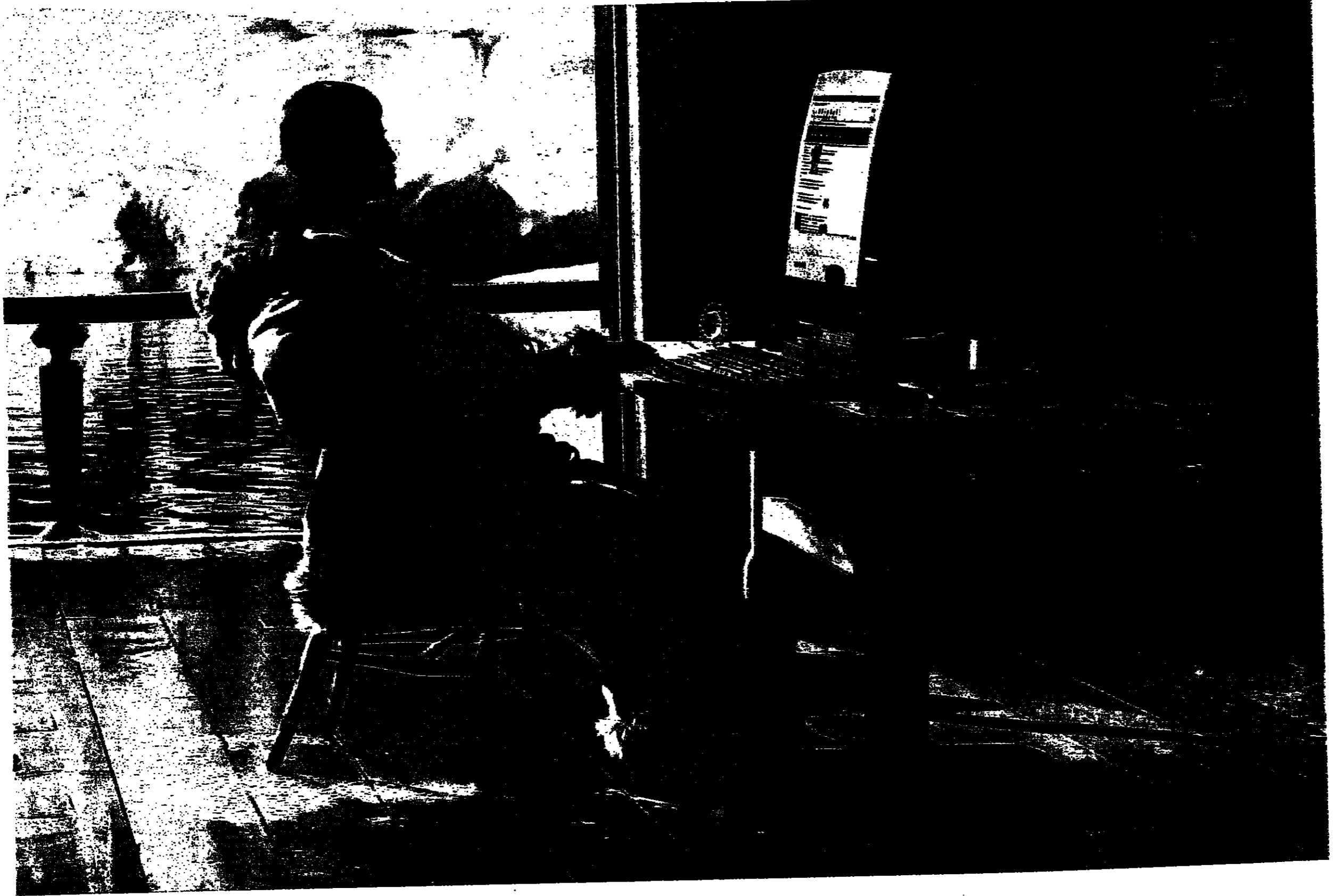
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# Pupils plunge 'town of the free' into race war

By Mary Braid  
in Vryburg

THEY arrived in pick-ups, armed with sjamboks and guns; 300 white parents intent on teaching black pupils a lesson at the former whites-only, Vryburg high school.

Half a dozen young men - graduates of the Afrikaans school - formed the vanguard, backed by angry Boer farmers from the backwaters of north-west province, stomping ground

of the white supremacist AWP movement. "The white men sjamboked every black they saw," said one black teenager later. Some children were so badly beaten they were hospitalised.

The assaults came on Tuesday after Vryburg's head teacher, and two members of the white-dominated school board, were allegedly taken hostage by five black pupils who had been suspended from school.

Four days of rioting and petrol-bombing in Vryburg

town centre and Huhudi, its adjoining black township, followed. Yesterday the streets were still being patrolled by soldiers and policemen, drafted in after Hoffman Galeng, Vryburg's first black mayor, accused local police of participating in the assaults.

Some of the new South Africa's most vicious power struggles are taking place in the sticks, where the sjambok-wielding white baas was once king and blacks are now hammering on the

baas's castle doors. In Vryburg - "town of the free" - there is no whiff of the "Rainbow nation".

It is two years since the high school was forced by law to admit black pupils. At break-times blacks and whites still sit at opposite ends of the playground.

"We do not mix," said the head boy, Brendan Gous, 18. "We don't want to mix with them and they don't want to mix with us."

He said the school reflects the wider community. "On the streets [of Vryburg] you never

see a white walking with a black. Black pupils have been sent here to disrupt," he said.

He will not say who sent them, but parents and teachers clearly believe Mayor Galeng - "a racist who hates all whites" - according to one parent leader - is puppet master.

The head girl, Martelle Schoeman, 17, also has no desire to mix with blacks. She said Tuesday's gathering was "a statement" after months of disruption by black children

demanding exemption from recent school fee increases. "This is our school and they want to make it a black school," she said. Like many of friends she has no sympathy with complaints about fees.

Apartheid is not confined to the playground. Black and white pupils are taught separately. Vryburg is determined to hold on to its Afrikaner identity and the black pupils, now a seventh of the 700-strong school roll, refuse to be taught

in Afrikaans. They insist on English-medium lessons.

Five black teachers have been employed for English classes, but they cannot cover all subjects. That the black children miss out on science is the sorest point, as the old apartheid regime kept them out of the lab on the grounds that they were destined to be labourers.

Blacks are now boycotting the school.

In a break between riots and demonstrations, Calvin, 18, said

the fee rises forced him to leave Vryburg High. "And they treated us badly," he added to nods from his friends. But Raymond, 19, said the fight is just beginning. "They have got to let us in, or it will be a fight to push them out of the school."

They have the support of an older generation robbed of opportunity. "We in Vryburg do not see the new South Africa," said businessman Winston Kekesi. "We just see racism, and the children are angry."

## Germans see the joke in a Eurovision hopeful

By Imre Karacs  
in Bonn

EUROVISION addicts beware. Beyond the usual thousand tortures inflicted upon body and soul, this year's song contest in Birmingham has something special in store, potent enough to test the pain threshold of the hardest survivors.

Dismayed with decades of underachievement and abysmal failure, the Germans are about to shower unsuspecting Europeans with their brand of wit. The contestant they have selected to represent the country in May is Guido Horn, the balding middle-aged showman who makes his living parodying "Schlager", the syrupy songs so beloved by the older generation, particularly in Bavaria.

Horn dresses badly, sings with a hoarse voice and composes allegedly witty lyrics, such as "I like Steffi" to Bee Gees numbers and the folksy tunes of the Deep South - of Germany, that is. His supporting band is called "Orthopaedic Stockings". Fans think he is hilarious. Teeny-boppers scream when "Der Meister" comes on stage, and grannies cover their misty eyes with handkerchiefs.

But not all Germans are in awe of the singer's talents. "Should this man be allowed to represent Germany?" screamed the headline on the front page of *Bild Zeitung*. Other newspapers took up the theme, pursuing the star into his dressing room, analysing the secret of his success and running straw poll among their readers.

In the end, only one poll mattered. This year's winner was to be chosen by the great German public, or at least that section which could bear to sit through the domestic finals on Thursday night. The result of the telephone poll was unequivocal: Horn was crowned Germany's new Mastersinger, scooping 62 per cent of all votes.

Horn had only one comment to make about the controversy surrounding him. "Every country gets the representative it deserves," he declared in his victory speech. That nearly brought the house down.



Master stroke: Guido Horn celebrates after being chosen as Germany's entrant for the Eurovision Song Contest. Photograph: Reuters

## Maharajah plays the feudal card to stay in power

By Peter Popham  
in New Delhi

"WE WILL re-elect Madhav Rao Scindia because he has done so much for the development of our city". This view, repeated by everybody one meets in Gwalior like a mantra, strikes the newcomer as a sick joke.

Today the central Indian city of Gwalior goes to the polls along with 130 other constituencies. There are 17 candidates here, but last time Mr Scindia, now general secretary of the Congress party, won with a majority of 223,000, and no one doubts it will be another "cake walk" for the incumbent today. Two reasons are cited: his contribution to Gwalior's development; and the fact that he is the local Maharajah.

In theory that should be ex-Maharajah, for princely titles were abolished at independence. But in Gwalior there is no "ex" about it. The captions to the portrait of the chubby, 55-year-old in the palace museum describe him as Maharajah, in full as "Shrimant Maharajah Madhav Rao Scindia". In the city's main square, his supporters, who packed the place for his final campaign rally on Thursday, hailed him as the good king of Gwalior.

Yet, apart from its princely bits - the vast Italianate palace, and the fort on its huge flat escarpment 300ft above the town - Gwalior seems a terrible place. From the trishaw drivers mobbing one like wasps at the station to the sick-thin, starving beggars, from the piles of rubbish and excrement defacing patches of greenery to the clouds of choking black smoke spewed by the stretch tuk-tuks that serve as taxis, Gwalior comes a long way down the list of Indian cities.

The palace was built in the 1870s to the design of a British architect, rushed up in three years to be ready for inspection by the Prince of Wales, and it is a great, frail wedding cake of a thing. Next door, in the old palace guesthouse, now a hotel, European visitors enjoy the lawns and herbaceous borders. Nearby lie the flashy concrete villas of favoured retainers; in their shadow a tiny old woman in rags gathers twigs for fuel.

But the king of Gwalior is clearly doing something right because if he wins today it will be the fifth time Gwalior has sent him to Delhi. Despite his pedigree, Mr Scindia is a veteran politician. He was first elected

in 1971 as the BJP (Hindu Nationalist) candidate for the neighbouring constituency of Guna. Not coincidentally, Guna is also part of his ancestral domain, and is now represented for the BJP by his mother, Vijaya Scindia.

In 1985, he had a falling out with the BJP, joined Congress, came to Gwalior and soundly thrashed Atal Vajpayee, now the Hindu Nationalist candidate for Prime Minister. In 1991, he had an argument with the Congress prime minister and left the party, and in 1996, standing in Gwalior as an independent, he was again returned with an imposing majority. Now he is back in the party and standing as the official candidate.

Dynasty and pedigree have something to do with this run of success but not everything. "The feudal background is an advantage," he admitted. "But it's not enough in itself. A lot of ruling families have not succeeded. You have to use the good will as a platform."

Mr Scindia's contribution to Gwalior's development is not at first obvious, but roaming further afield it is apparent. During the Congress years in power he held a series of ministerial posts which he turned to Gwalior's benefit. "When he was railway minister," says his friend, fellow Congress MP and former foreign minister Nataraj Singh, "he ensured every new railway line had to pass through Gwalior."

Later, as Minister of Tourism, he gave Gwalior an airport, and built the spanking new Indian Institute of Tourism Management on the city's fringe. As Minister of Human Resource Development he endowed the city with the mysteriously named Institute of Health Management and Communities. He has also induced numerous companies to build factories on the city's outskirts.

This is pork barrel politics pure and simple, but it goes down a storm. Mr Scindia's brand of old-fashioned paternalism is most attractive. Every morning he holds an audience at his palace where all may come to tell him their woes. Why, then, can he apparently do nothing about the dreadful condition of the place?

"This is an Indian city," he told me. "You have to accept that development in India moves slowly because it is a democracy." The implication is obvious: if he really was king of Gwalior, things would be transformed overnight.

## Fortress fails to save Israelis in Hizbollah danger zone

THE 120mm mortar round which killed three Israeli soldiers on Thursday as they scanned the hills of South Lebanon from the ramparts of Karkum Fortress in the Israeli occupation zone, was fired by Hizbollah guerrillas to the north, writes Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem.

I visited Karkum. Hebrew for

"crocus", in December and walked along the top of the 50ft walls of tumbled stone, broken by gun positions and sentry posts. Soldiers stared into the hills looking for the Hizbollah squads which attacked Karkum three times last year. It is one of the most dangerous Israeli positions in South Lebanon because here the occupa-

tion zone is only two and a half miles across. Unlike most of the front-line positions it is manned by Israeli and not by the South Lebanon army. The death of the three soldiers brings to an end a period in which Israeli casualties in Lebanon have been reduced. Since January they had lost only one soldier against 19 Hizbol-

lah claimed as dead - two yesterday. Demands in Israel for a withdrawal from Lebanon reached a peak last year as losses inflicted by Hizbollah escalated; 219 Israeli soldiers have been killed and 694 wounded in Lebanon since 1985. The army believes it has succeeded in making it more difficult for Hizbollah to in-

filtrate the occupation zone to lay ambushes or plant roadside bombs.

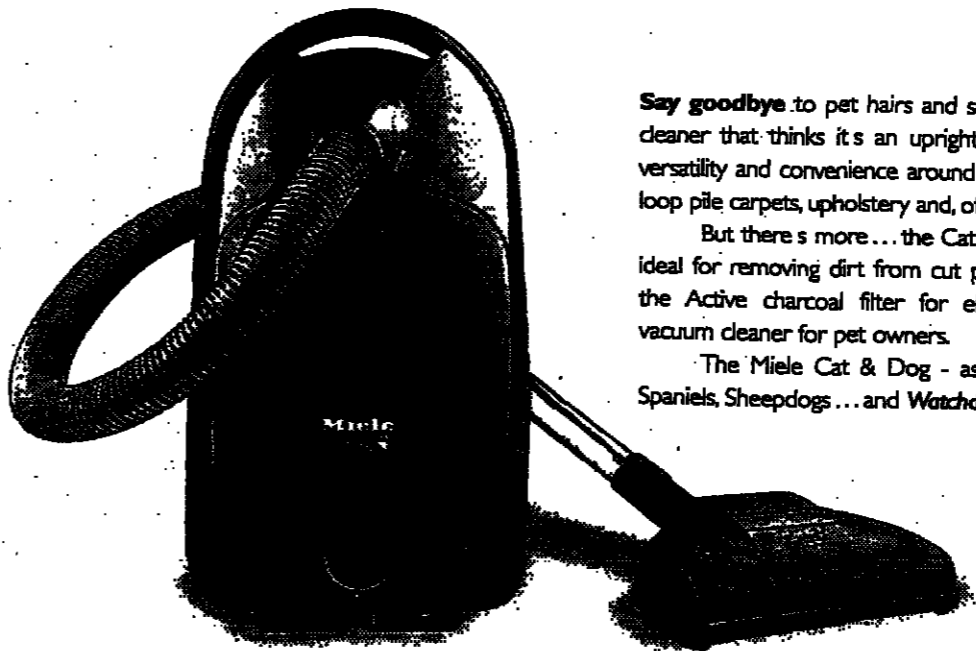
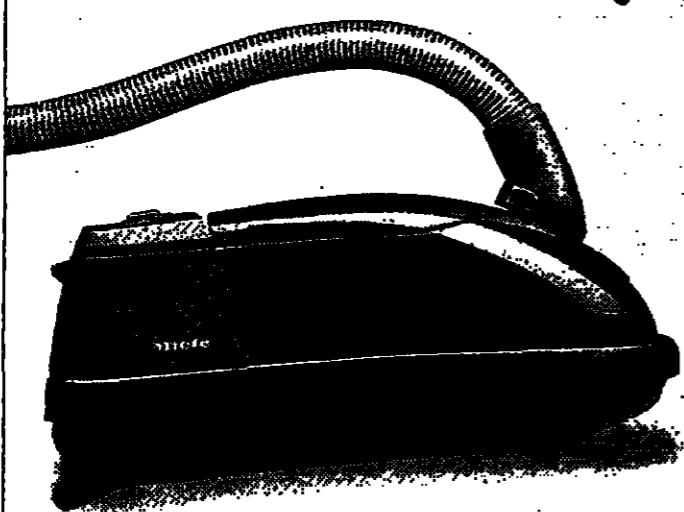
But the death of three soldiers on the walls of Karkum, despite its array of modern weapons and walls built with all the protective zeal of the Middle Ages, underlines that for the Israeli army, South Lebanon remains a very dangerous place.

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# First eleven pass the single-currency test

## EMU entry

By Katherine Butler  
in Brussels

EUROPE'S single-currency project passed a milestone yesterday as 11 of the 12 countries seeking to join in 1999 unveiled statistical proof that they qualify.

Single-currency champions were able to brush aside uncertainty, and declare the way was clear for the inauguration of an 11-country euro-zone

next January. Months of belt-tightening and creative accounting appear to have paid off as the EMU endgame moves into focus.

The three big players, France, Germany and debt-strapped Italy, said they and eight other hopefuls had scraped through the key entry criterion set by the Maastricht Treaty, which is to have a public deficit no greater than 3 per cent of GDP.

Only Greece - by its own admission - failed to get its public finances in shape, leaving it

on the sidelines with Britain, Sweden and Denmark, which have all ruled themselves out of the first wave.

Britain is one of only four countries comfortably to meet the Maastricht conditions on borrowing and debt in the strictest sense.

Assessment of the economic results for 1997, the year on which countries are being judged, rests with European Commission statisticians. They will vet national submissions in time for a final selection by EU leaders on 2 May.

But, despite suspicions about statistical fudging, few expect Brussels to quibble with the reports handed in yesterday. These show that 11 states have brought borrowing down to the point where it is at or below the 3 per cent of GDP limit.

Public-deficit figures in Germany and Italy were better than expected at 2.7 per cent. France had the narrowest escape, weighing in at the 3.0 per cent of GDP limit.

Indebtedness remains a cause for concern, with only four of the 11 meeting the target.

Italy and Belgium have debt levels twice as high as the Maastricht limit of 60 per cent of GDP.

But the treaty architects included scope to admit entry to the euro-zone if a country's debt is falling satisfactorily.

Germany registered a debt just above the target but Bonn pleads special circumstances arising out of unification.

Ultimately the decision on who joins is a political one and most political leaders now seem satisfied to go with the launch of a widely based euro rather

than one founded on a core of the strongest economies.

Doubts about the sustainability of the economic discipline which has been achieved, particularly in Italy, will fuel speculation that sterling could rise even higher in value if investors view the euro as weak.

Britain is in theory keeping its options open but as the launch nears, pressure on the Government from big business will intensify.

A big obstacle for the UK is the requirement to join a re-

vamped Exchange-Rate Mechanism, or to at least make sure sterling shadows the euro, for a period of two years before it can join.

In the capitals there was quiet satisfaction rather than a rush to pop champagne corks, reflecting the scale of the struggle ahead.

Welfare cuts and social unrest have accompanied the drive to shrink public borrowing in France and Germany, and more can be expected, with unemployment at record levels and rising.

## HOW THEY MET THEIR TARGETS

Compliance with the Maastricht criteria in 1997  
Deficit not to exceed 3% of GDP  
Germany -2.7%  
France -3.0%  
Italy -2.7%  
Belgium -2.1%  
Spain -2.6%  
Portugal -2.45%  
Netherlands -1.5%  
Ireland +0.9%  
Luxembourg +1.7%  
Austria -2.5%  
Finland -0.9%

## Political will triumphs over arithmetic

### Analysis

By Rupert Cornwell

THE figures unwrapped by aspiring members of the European Union's single currency may seem only dry-as-dust economic book-keeping. In fact, and just like the euro itself, they could not be more political.

For almost a year now, the question surrounding the euro has been not "if" but "when", and its main requirement that enough countries meet the qualifying Maastricht criteria to make the venture worthwhile.

That 11 countries are now willing and able to embark on the most ambitious venture since the 1957 Treaty of Rome is not a surprise. What is remarkable is that, given the political capital at stake, the book-keeping has been relatively honest.

There has, of course, been some sleight of hand. It remains mysterious quite how Italy, which for years regularly ran double-digit budget deficits, conveniently slashed last year's to a mere 2.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, well inside the 3 per cent Maastricht guideline. There is also the matter of Rome's public debt, 121.6 per cent of GDP and more than double the Maastricht ceiling of 60 per cent. But we are told, it is moving in the right direction (unlike Germany's rather less sinful 61.3 per cent which is in fact increasing).

But a euro without Germany is inconceivable. And for Italy, a founder member of the EU for whom participation in the euro is proof it belongs in the Premier League of European nations, missing the single currency launch would have been a terrible blow to the country's pride and self-respect.

Hence the challenge laid down yesterday by Romano Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister. In economic terms, Italy had met the spirit and the letter of the requirements. Mr Prodi said. Therefore any objections would have to be on political grounds. To which the EU Eco-

nomics Affairs Commissioner, Yves-Thibaut de Silguy, replied: "Don't worry." The final decision would be taken on economic grounds. It would not be "discriminatory".

A few hurdles remain. On 25 March, the European Commission will issue its recommendations, and two days later the Bundesbank, which has taken a jaundiced view of a "broad" and potentially softer Euro including Italy and Spain, will present its report on the matter.

This is the last real bump in the single currency's path, though probably not a big enough one to throw the project off course. The formal selection of participants will be made by EU finance ministers at the start of May.

But no one doubts the Euro will start on schedule in January 1999, or that it will have 11 members. The fighting henceforth will be over the details; in particular who will be President of the new European Central Bank, and the degree of political control over the ECB.

For the smooth run-up to the launch, Europe must offer special thanks to the business cycle. Inflation around the industrial world is minimal. At just the right moment, Germany and France, the two biggest economies, are gathering speed. Their expected growth of 2.5 to 3 per cent in 1998 will underpin EU expansion, helping to lift government revenues and reduce deficits everywhere.

The biggest risk to the euro now is a sudden slowdown that would see the weaker economies under intense pressures to take Maastricht-busting national measures to rekindle growth. Such a recession is unlikely, but not impossible.

For the "outs" and the "pre-ins" - Britain above all, but also Denmark, Sweden, and Greece inside the Union, and Switzerland and Norway who are not in the EU - the coming of the euro will further reduce the scope for independent economic management. Yesterday's figures furnished what tiny doubts there were that come it will.



Economic virtues: Chancellor Helmut Kohl in front of a banner of Catholic pilgrims in Bonn yesterday. He was meeting 65 pilgrims travelling from Eichstaett in eastern Germany to Cologne. Photograph: Arnd Wiegmann/Reuters

## Translators' business is booming in the Babel of Brussels

### The explainer

By Steve Crowshaw  
in Brussels

THE documents are displayed on the wall like a discreet version of a Dulux colour chart. If you want to know about the latest Euro-decisions, you must only choose your shade. Light blue, sea-blue and navy blue will give you French, Finnish and Greek respectively. Or there is a pink, two yellows, an orange, pillar-box and burgundy, and two greens. Pick your colour, take your choice.

In Brussels, translation is a booming business. At the European Commission, a million pages a year are translated into 11 languages at the cost of a quarter of a billion pounds. At the European Parliament, translation and interpreting already eats up one-third of the entire budget, translating from Svenska to Portuguese to Suomi to Ellenika.

That is only the beginning. The 11 languages of the existing Union are set to expand with the addition of five east European countries in a few years' time. All of which makes life both complicated and expensive, at a time when streamlining is *de rigueur*.

In some respects, life would be simpler if just a small number of languages were used - French and English, for example. The Germans don't mind which languages are used - "as long as German is included". And so it goes on: nobody wants to feel they are a linguistic

add-on. Language equals national dignity and national dignity has no price. Officials sometimes complain they cannot understand what is going on if the full complement of interpreters is not provided; more often than not, the complaint about understanding nothing is made in immaculate French or English.

The paradox of the expensive interpreting services is that many officials in Brussels are multilingual to a fault. For those who need translation, however, the problem is more acute. Already, there is an unsurprising lack of interpreters for such combinations as Finnish-Portuguese. When Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia are added to the brew, things get more complicated still. Each session needs dozens of interpreters to cope with every possible combination.

Gridlock approaches. One way out, which is being tentatively explored, is to use "pivot" languages as a reference point - a kind of linguistic Clapham Junction. Thus, a Swedish speaker can be translated into English, and from there into Greek. One disadvantage is that the listeners are out of sync. "Already, the Greeks laugh last at the jokes. The Estonians will be laughing two days later," said one diplomat.

For many, language is the crux of national identity, which makes the cumbersome system difficult to change. But the Euro-Dulux chart can hardly expand for ever. One diplomat acknowledged: "It's becoming a real tower of Babel."

## Magician of Bonn wins applause for balancing books trick

### Kohl's victory

By Imre Karacs in Bonn

WITH a little tuck here, and a sleight of hand there, Germany conjured up a respectable budget deficit yesterday, scattering doubts about its ability to launch monetary union on time.

According to the long-awaited final figures published yesterday, Germany's budget deficit stood last year at 2.7 per cent of GDP under the European Union's accounting rules, or 2.8 per cent under German practice. Both figures are comfortably inside the confines imposed by the Maastricht Treaty.

"This is an impressive confirmation of the policies of the government and particularly Finance Minister Theo Waigel," Chancellor Helmut Kohl said. "I

am certain the euro will come on time as agreed on 1 January 1999. And it will be a stable currency, just as we have been accustomed to for nearly 50 years with the [German] mark."

Relief was visible on the beaming face of the Finance Minister as he presented his flattering statistics, seizing the opportunity to attack "doubters and malicious critics". The latter might have included the

gnomes of the Bundesbank, who at one point refused to allow Mr Waigel to walk away with their board. The attempted gold robbery was the most desperate of ploys he devised to fatten up the books. He lost that battle, and also failed to shuffle revenues from privatisations into the right page of the books.

Ultimately, it is the swingeing cuts imposed by the government that saved the day.

Despite an export-fuelled boom, income from taxes grew little last year. At the last minute, the government slashed expenditure, trimming public investments by 10 per cent. That desperate action, representing 0.4 per cent of GDP, might be construed by civil tongues as the kind of "one-off measure" specifically forbidden in the Maastricht Treaty.

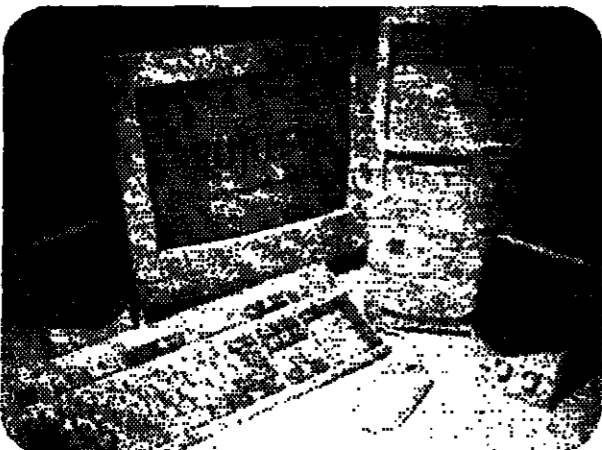
But given the trickery of

some other prospective members of Emu it would be a small quibble. The other European states will happily turn a blind eye to Germany's failure to fulfil the criterion on cumulative public debt. In 1997, this stood at 61.3 per cent of GDP, a whisker above the Maastricht limit.

While economists grumbled about the quality of book-keeping, opposition politicians acclaimed the statistics.

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## One Company makes three a crowd...

Synge's 'Shadow' puts Yeats in the shade: Paul Taylor on an RSC trilogy

Three plays in an hour and a quarter? Sounds more like something you'd associate with the Reduced Shakespeare Company than with the Royal Shakespeare Company. It's intensity, of course, not duration that matters where a theatrical experience is concerned and so, in prospect, a trio of powerful Irish one-acters – two by JM Synge, the other by WB Yeats – looked like a highly tempting proposition from the RSC. But, in the event, despite many local pleasures, these pieces fail to work as the kind of triptych where the whole lends added meaning to the parts.

A proportion of the blame lies with the staging, which gives rise to some dubious interpretative decisions. The audience sits in banks on both sides of the long central acting area. Director John Crowley has tried to make a virtue of the fact that the transitions from one play to another have to happen in full view by presenting the three plays in a seamless flow. So, at the end of *Riders to the Sea* – Synge's bleak Lorca-like focus on the desolation of a family of women who learn that they have now lost all their menfolk to the waves – Stella McCusker's grim, heart-breaking mother suddenly slaps the corpse of the son she has been laying out with such ritualistic dignity; the actor springs up and, to loud whoops and a jaunty communal dance, the action segues into the mischievous black comedy of the same author's *The Shadow of the Glen*.

You can see the reasoning behind this. *Shadow* begins with a most unorthodox wake (just an isolated woman and the body of her elderly unloving husband, who is only pretending to be dead to test her fidelity). So why not modulate into this with an abrupt gleeful wake for a playfully resurrected man? Well, one objection is that, for me, the effect felt like a desecration and betrayal of the tragic mood so austere established in *Riders*. Second, the woman's bitter, curmudgeonly husband (Lalor Roddy), popping into bed at the start and lying doggo, made a point of letting us see that this was a con trick, which robbed the play of



Mairead McKinley in 'Shadows' Neil Libbert

the surprise element built into it by Synge. It's rather as though Hermione were to tip the audience the wink that she wasn't really just an inert statue at the start of the great coming-to-life scene in *The Winter's Tale*.

Mairead McKinley is excellent in both plays, as the more intense and confrontational of the daughters in *Riders* and as the wife, driven first to pained shrewishness by her mean-minded spouse and then into the arms of a shy, visiting tramp with the poetic gift of the gab. People who enjoy the comedy of current wunderkind Martin McDonagh will find here the wonderful genuine article he ruthlessly imitates. But *Shadow* and *Riders* combined prove to be a far from ideal preparation for the final piece, Yeats's *Purgatory* – a passionate, starkly abstract demonstration of sin recycling itself through the generations. It's a great play, like some compressed, ghostly and ghostly negation of the redemption-over-time in Shakespeare's late romances. But it made more of an impact when it was given as part of a recent Yeats season at the little Penumbers Theatre in Hampstead. Here, it's in the right company but the wrong company. *The Other Place*, RSC, Stratford. Booking: 01789 295623



In search of full houses (with or without the fourth wall): Alan Ayckbourn outside the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough

Photograph: John Anderson/Guzzellian

## A room with a (partial) view

Alan Ayckbourn's latest play takes the lid off the sex life of the single girl. Another tall storey, says Jasper Rees, to add to the other fifty-one

Alan Ayckbourn's *pie-d-à-terre*, in a swankily converted Victorian wharf in Wapping, could be a set from one of his own plays. The low ceiling is impaled by girders thrusting through the whole building, there's a small open kitchen off the plushly neutral sitting-room, and the Thames flows just under the French windows. The trio of failed suicides in *Absurd Person Singular* could have ended it all right here by jumping off their creator's balcony.

The brown-brick walls are lined with *Evening Standard* Drama Awards, each with a comical set of conical breasts. There are seven in all, dating back to 1973. One stops the office door. Last month they were joined by a similarly endowed Lloyds Playwright of the Year Award, which Ayckbourn won for *Things We Do for Love*. It is his 52nd play, premiered last year as usual in Scarborough, where he is approaching 30 years as artistic director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre. It opens this week in the West End, where for a while Ayckbourn's plays have lacked the impact they once had. The omens are good. This is only the second occasion in 52 that Ayckbourn has been able to put a house with storeys on-stage. The other was *A Small Family Business*, at the Olivier Theatre, which took over 10 years ago.

*Things We Do for Love* is set in three converted flats, but only the bottom half of the top flat and the top half of the bottom half are visible. Most of the action takes place on the first floor, where Barbara, a single woman in her early 40s, lives an apparently contented life uncluttered by sex. Her helpful downstairs neighbour, Gilbert, is a widower who, it turns out, is so obsessed with her that he's painting a pornographic portrait on his ceiling. Into the upstairs flat move Nikki, Barbara's doing best friend from school, and Hamish, the latest unsuitable man in her life. When Barbara and Hamish meet, it's at first sight, but by the end of Act

One they're in the upstairs flat, shucking off their clothes and, tentatively out of the audience's sight-lines, making frenetic love on the bed.

Believe it or not, the inspiration for this scene comes from Clint Eastwood's encounter in *In the Line of Fire* with a fellow CIA agent (female). "It's shot from floor level," says Ayckbourn. "They're taking off all this body armour and guns and handcuffs and all you see is this stuff showering on the floor until you hear, 'Beep beep beep... yeah, yeah, we'll be in 10 minutes. Oh, Christ, we gotta put all this on again.' It's a wonderful sex scene and I thought I'd love to shoot a stage play from the feet."

Ayckbourn has written plays that make use of the horizontal triptych (see *panel*), but the three-tier stack is new. Ever since the theatre moved to bigger premises in 1995, multi-level designs have been ungainly on the Stephen Joseph's in-the-round main stage. So this time he mounted it in the McCarthy, the theatre's smaller stage. "I was very worried it would become known as our 'studio', a space where you put on plays for brownie points that nobody wants to see. So I wanted to put my money where my mouth was."

The structural trickery stems from "a desire to make it more interesting." First, though, comes the theme, in this case a surprisingly unfamiliar one for Ayckbourn and also a very modish one:

sex and the single girl. "I wanted to write about the destructive effects of love. Barbara believes she has escaped the disease. She has got all the advantages: you sometimes see heavily married people look at single people with a glimmer of envy. It also has its negative sides: you're incredibly lonely. I also wanted to look at the way you can suddenly no longer be honourable. Barbara honestly believes that you don't bugger up your best friend's life. The scene where they tell Nikki is the nearest thing to Hansel and Gretel, with the parents saying, 'We're going to take you into the woods and dump you.'"

The play was written, as usual, in a blizzard of speed: three weeks flat. When Michael Winner wanted to film *A Chorus of Disapproval*, he pinned Ayckbourn down in this very flat and refused to leave without a screenplay. "I went into the study and he sat here smoking cigars and I wrote the film script in eight hours and I gave it to him at the end of the day and said, 'Now fuck off.'"

The production line has now sped forth play No 53, called *Comic Potential*, which will be premiered this spring. It's set in the future in a low-budget TV station which makes daytime soaps using androids as actors. A young writer turns up who wants to work in an outmoded, non-PC genre called "comedy." One of the female robots, who

starts corping at his lines, diagnoses her laughter as a "fault." "It's really about the nature of humour," says Ayckbourn. "Are comedians sick people? I think they have things that, if you're actually being very strict, you'd probably get rid of – tiny lesions in the brain which cause us to sometimes think, how the hell did they think of that?"

For all his formal originality, Ayckbourn doesn't see himself in that category, but there is clearly a fecundity there that allows the ideas to spill out so reliably. This year he has four more plays to write: a 50-minute piece for the BT National Connections, his biannual children's play for Scarborough, his next play for adults and, ending a long dissociation from the National, an adaptation of Ostrovsky's *The Forest* for Trevor Nunn. "The trouble is, I'm not quite sure how good an adapter I am. I tend to go off in my own world. I think what they're going to get is a play called *The Wood for the Trees*."

I ask him why he hasn't had one of his own plays on at the National since *A Small Family Business*. It certainly looks as if the now-departed Richard Eyre thought less highly of him than had his predecessor, Peter Hall. "Richard and I met and he said, 'I'd very much like you to write children's shows.' And I said, 'Sure, fine, but can I write some adult ones?' I sent him two and they didn't like them. One thing, I suppose, is that I said quite early on, 'I don't really want to write for the Cottesloe. It seems to me a very good space for younger, newer dramatists, but I work in that all my life – the one that really interests me is the Oliver.'"

*Things We Do for Love* is an Olivier-sized play which, like *A Small Family Business*, culminates in an act of prolonged violence triggered by a brilliant bit of comic business. A German director once phoned Ayckbourn to find out how many times the murder victim should be smashed over the head in *A Small Family Business* to make it unfunny. "I said, 'Oddly enough, seven.' He said, 'Really? We are doing only three.' I said, 'Oh, no, that's not convincing. Seven. They laugh on one, two and three: they're giggling at four; five they're beginning to think, fuck, what's going on? Six: oh, no!' I thought, what a stupid question, and then I thought, it's not a stupid question. It was my instinct when I was directing it to say, 'Keep going, keep going.'"

*Things We Do for Love*: from Tues, Gielgud Theatre, Shaftesbury Ave, London W1 (0171-494 5065)

### THE HOUSES THAT AYCKBOURN BUILT

**How the Other Half Loves (1969)**: cuts between two dinner parties that take place on consecutive days but at which the guests are the same.

**Bedroom Farce (1975)**: the action takes place in a triptych of bedrooms set alongside one another.

**The Norman Conquests (1973)**: a trilogy of plays in which the same set of events are seen from three different perspectives.

**Sisterly Feelings (1979)**: a toss of a coin decides which of the play's two alternative middle sections the audience gets to see.

**Taking Steps (1979)**: the action takes place on three floors of a house, set side by side.

**Way Upstream (1981)**: set on a river with, depending where and which night you saw it, a pool full of real water and real rain.

**Intimate Exchanges (1982)**: a play with 16 possible endings.

**A Small Family Business (1987)**: a cross-section of an entire house stands on-stage.

**Communicating Doors (1994)**: the characters go back in time through the eponymous hotel bedroom doors.

**Things We Do for Love (1997)**: the action takes place in three flats set on top of each other, but only the top half of the bottom flat and the bottom half of the top flat are visible.

### A WEEK IN THE ARTS DAVID LISTER

Can shit be art? If so, then the converse is also probable. This is a legitimate matter of debate, a matter of scholarship, even a matter of high fashion, at the end of a week that saw the great, the good and the glitzy paying homage to 32 cans of the stuff at three separate private views over three nights at the newly renovated Serpentine Gallery.

They were the work (or waste, depending on your viewpoint) of Piero Manzoni, the late Italian conceptualist. He called the cans *Merda d'artista*, which needs no translation. The Serpentine, which has just spent £3m of lottery money on its re-opening, is the gallery of which Princess Diana was patron, and she would have presided over its re-opening parties had she lived.

I watched Harry Enfield, Rory Bremner, Ffion Jenkins, Zandra Rhodes and (lest anyone doubt the eclecticism of private view guest lists) a Danish midfielder currently playing for Tottenham Hotspur, all puzzling over a glass display case containing the said cans of excrement.

It is easy to scoff at such things, though Messrs Enfield and Bremner of course, being comedians, remained sombre. But rather than scoff, I sought information from the show's curator, Germane Celant.

Celant was in charge of the last Venice Biennale. So knows more than most about *Merda d'artista*.

It turns out that Manzoni produced the work in 1961, at the height of Italy's post-war boom, as a signed and numbered edition of 90 that were weighed and sold for the equivalent of the current market rate of gold. Their labels describe the contents as 30 grams of artist's excrement, "naturally preserved". According to



Celant, "The cans offer a frank criticism of how works of art are turned into desirable objects of special meaning and value." They are not meant to be opened and their true content remains the object of conjecture.

Alas, no longer. An unhappy looking Serpentine employee confided in me that one of the cans had

leaked. The contents certainly seemed to be *merda*, quite possibly *d'artista*, and she was beginning to fall out of love with gallery work.

If the work was purely a joke, a small if laboured satire on fashions in art, I suppose one might have to give a grudging smile. But we are assured that there is a serious side to *Merda d'artista*. Even the Serpentine's usually incisive director Julia Peyton-Jones says, "It is compelling that an artist should explore his own body as artistic matter to that degree."

In an era when a disproportionate amount of conceptual art is dependent on wit, jokes and word-play, it is disconcerting to think that, in 30 years' time, scholarly debate could decide that behind all the jokes lie genuine physical and psychological exploration. It made me wish for a stiff drink. That, sadly, was impossible. In the Serpentine Gallery, once a tea house, even a cup of tea is impossible to find after the £4m renovation.

Royal Park regulations that forbid extending the building any further do give the Serpentine Gallery some problems, but with its existing flat roof overlooking Hyde Park and the Serpentine itself, the gallery could have one of the most delightful refreshment areas in London. Gallery chairman Lord Palumbo, who knows a bit about battling against planning regulations, should ensure that steps are taken soonest. Art-lovers need nourishment, though, in present circumstances, I will avoid anything in a can.

### THE WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

Audiences are slippery customers. A mindless faith in the efficacy of the studio audience has slaughtered any number of slight and subtle comedy programmes, artificially primed guffaws swamping the sly smile that ought to have been aimed for. But other comedies have been rescued from oblivion by an audience's hooting attentions – no one can doubt that the extraordinary recent resurgence of *I'm Sorry, I Haven't a Clue* owes a lot to the decision to take the programme around the country, recording it in front of student audiences whose informed and enthusiastic appreciation has oiled some creaky old gags.

Presumably it's in the hope of creating the same magic that this year's *Reith Lectures* (John Keegan on "War and Our World") are going to be dragged out of the studio and put in front of real people. Two new programmes this week showed what a mixed blessing an audience can be when you are trying to put a serious argument. On Saturday, Gore Vidal opened a series called *The Sounding the Century Lectures* on Radio 3 with a faint at American foreign policy under the rubric "The Last Empire, or It Is Earlier than You Think".

He began by explaining to his South Bank audience that he would be reading his text, "but I shall look up from time to time to give an air of spontaneity". You doubt that an air of spontaneity has clung to anything Vidal has done since he was potty-trained – his replies to questions after his main oration were as polished and glittering as anything he had taken from the page. But he did manage to keep up a sense that this speech was part of a conversation, and not simply a soliloquy.

Audience participation worked less well in the first *Lion's Den* (Wed. R4), in which Bryan Appleyard was cast in the role of Daniel; putting the case that theatre is hugely over-rated to a hostile audience of actors, playwrights, directors and critics. Appleyard's arguments were largely feeble – complaining, for instance, that Shakespeare on stage never lives up to Shakespeare on the page, as if failure to attain ideals was not intrinsic to artistic effort. He even argued that, being collaborative and interpretative, theatre shouldn't even be called "art" – well, bang goes the symphonic tradition, eh?

Sadly, the smug, feeble-minded responses from his audience had the effect of making his arguments sound more intellectually respectable than they were. Cue hollow laughs at the expense of theatre – a live art that relies on audiences, but has no idea how to be one.

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# Bookworm who turned

An idealistic young publisher has exposed Rupert Murdoch as a liar, writes David Lister

IN THE end it didn't take a fellow media magnate or a disgruntled famous editor to expose Rupert Murdoch as a liar and a threat to democracy.

The unlikely hero of a week of drama, writs and leaked memos is a young, idealistic bookworm: a publisher who would no longer tolerate Murdoch trying to subordinate a once great publishing house to his own business interests.

Thirty-six year old Stuart Proffitt had a job he loved: working at HarperCollins on Chris Patten's memoirs of the Hong Kong handover. Murdoch, who owns HarperCollins, wanted to ditch the book as it criticises the Chinese. Murdoch is in the business of toadying to China's totalitarian regime, as he wants to extend his TV empire into the lucrative Chinese market. So the Patten book had to be ditched. And, as is normal with Murdoch, he expected his staff to lie for him, to claim that the book was "substandard." To HarperCollins's eternal shame, the key executives involved agreed to do so. It is all in a day's work in Murdochland.

But Stuart Proffitt refused. He thought the manuscript first rate. He also believed there was a certain honour, a certain integrity left in publishing even in these days of ownership by multinationals. And so he defied Murdoch. He paid with his job.

As he told the tale this week, a picture emerged, as it has never emerged before, of how a once-great publishing house now kow-tows to a media tycoon pursuing his own wider business interests, just as that owner kow-tows to the Chinese.

As Proffitt worked on the book, Murdoch's henchmen in Britain and America began an offensive to ditch it and show it was not up to scratch. Proffitt stood up to Murdoch's henchmen to declare that the Patten book was the best by a politician he had read in 15 years. Proffitt would have to go. Literary worth, accuracy, democracy, historical record—all these things count for nothing in HarperCollins if they get in the way of Murdoch's global ambition.

The bravery of Stuart Proffitt has shattered the reputation of the publishing company he has served since leaving university. It is hard to see how any of its authors, ranging from Jeffrey Archer to John Major, from Doris Lessing to Arundhati Roy, can hold their heads up now. Fay Weldon is already signalling that she wants to sever her connection with Murdoch's yes men.

Other publishers are preparing their chequebooks. Martin Neil, managing director of Hodder and Stoughton, predicts: "The general uncertainty will spread among HarperCollins's writers. Of course, we will take advantage of the situation." Inside HarperCollins, senior and junior employees are reeling. One insider said: "There's stunned disbelief here. I cannot recall this type of interference before."

There speaks a man who has not studied the career of Keith Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch has an eclectic interest in communications. He owns HarperCollins. He owns Twentieth Century Fox. BSkyB and Star TV in Asia. His newspaper empire embraces *The Australian*, the *New York Post*



China Syndrome: Murdoch's TV interests led HarperCollins to ditch the Chris Patten book

Photograph: Neal C Lawson/Reuters

and, over here, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun* and *The News of the World*.

Murdoch's use of his communications empire to try to subvert democracy is commonplace. Just as the Conservatives in the Eighties opposed moves to refer his newspaper and television acquisitions to the Monopolies Commission, so Tony Blair and his Government have proved remarkably uninterested in complaints about predatory pricing by *The Times*.

He offered Republican senate leader Newt Gingrich \$4.5m for a complete non-book: a thinly disguised inducement to acquiesce to Murdoch's lobbying interests.

He dismissed Andrew Neil as editor of *The Sunday Times* because he was worried his television interests in Asia would be damaged by the paper's persistent investigation into "aid" payments by Britain to Malaysia to get building contracts for the Pergau Dam. Neil got a £1m pay-off.

He axed the BBC's World Service channel from his Star TV network in order to appease the Beijing regime, who were less than impressed by Kate Adie's reports of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

He pressurised once-respectable publisher Basic Books in New York, a recent

acquisition, to release a cringingly propagandistic biography of Deng Xiaoping, amid lavish publicity. Its author? Deng Ron, the despot's own daughter.

Murdoch's kow-towing to Beijing has paid off. China, the biggest single prize in the global TV market, has just granted him the extraordinary "special concession" of launching a Mandarin language channel, Phoenix, for the Chinese market.

Then, to Murdoch's annoyance, came trouble from HarperCollins.

The Patten manuscript was being handled by Proffitt, who had secured a £125,000 contract with Patten. But for Proffitt, it was a labour of love.

After reading the manuscript at home over a weekend, he sent a memo to Eddie Bell, the head of HarperCollins UK, entitling: "I finished Chris Patten's text (the first two thirds of the book) over the weekend. The impression I had when I'd finished the first chapter is confirmed. This is probably the most lucid, best written and compelling book I have read by any politician of any persuasion since I came into publishing."

It was an unusual move for Proffitt to write a memo about the manuscript to his

boss, as he did on Tuesday, 20 January. He had a reason. As he revealed in a legal declaration, published in *The Daily Telegraph*, he was aware that HarperCollins's proprietor was taking an unhealthy interest in the book, an interest that was to bring the bookworm into headlong collision with the media magnate.

He had, he said, been told several times in late 1997 by Eddie Bell "that Rupert Murdoch had called him to express extreme displeasure that we had signed the book".

As Murdoch's ex-newspaper editors know, calls from across the sea expressing extreme displeasure at their decisions are not to be ignored.

The next day, 21 January, Eddie Bell sent a copy of Proffitt's report on the book to America and his boss, Anthea Disney, chairman and CEO of News America Publishing, a wholly owned subsidiary of News Corporation. Anthea Disney, at 50, still has the slim figure, black hair and dark eyes that in the Seventies accompanied her New York column for the *Daily Mail*. She was not one to ignore her patron's "extreme displeasure". And she ordered Bell to relinquish the rights to the book.

Bell's memo to Disney reminded her of

the bad PR such a move would attract. He wrote: "Following your instruction to relinquish rights, I have given considerable thought to the potential ramifications of such action. The more I have thought about this, the more concerned I have become. In fact, I am extremely worried."

The memo continues: "K.R.M. has outlined to me the negative aspects of publication which I fully understand... With in Britain, NewsCorp's actions are clearly tracked and reported on by an often hostile media. NewsCorp's ambitions in China are often commented upon."

Proffitt continued editing and praising the Patten book, giving a dinner in Patten's honour at the Savoy on 29 January.

A week later, Proffitt was informed that a decision had been taken to withdraw Patten's book on the grounds that "the text was disappointing and that it was not worth what we had paid for it". Proffitt said he would have to consider his position. He was sent home and suspended from work.

On 10 February Adrian Bourne contacted Chris Patten's literary agent, Michael Sissons, and told him they were not going to publish the book as "it did not accord with the synopsis and was below

standard". Sissons was gobsmacked and the pair met that afternoon. Sissons recalls: "I was not only smelling a rat. It was dangling right in front of my nose. He blurted out that Chris Patten did not seem to have anything good to say about Asia. Then the penny dropped."

The penny, of course, is that Murdoch wants to extend his TV empire into China and cannot risk offending the totalitarian Chinese regime.

Stuart Proffitt is suing HarperCollins for constructive dismissal, declaring this week that what they asked of him "would have meant, in short, both lying and doing enormous damage to my own reputation. This is not something which a company can properly ask one of its employees to do".

Mr Proffitt is right. Lying and doing enormous damage to your reputation is not something a company should ask one of its employees to do. But that is a perilously old-fashioned principle in Murdochland, where lies and reputations count for little.

If Tony Blair wants more details about his most powerful media supporter, he should give Stuart Proffitt a ring. He's easy to reach, being out of work at present.

Additional reporting by Mel Steel

## BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

### DEATHS

**SMEALL:** James Leathley, peacefully on 24 February after a short illness. He will be very much missed by his family and many friends. Cremated privately, followed by a service to celebrate his life in St Margaret's Church, Ipswich, Suffolk, on Friday 13 March at 12 noon. Enquiries and donations if desired in aid of the Exeter and District Hospice to Peter Turi, 16 Victoria Road, Ipswich, Essex IP3 0EU. 01392 873955.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1, Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 071-293 2012 (24-hour answering machine) or faxed to 071-293 2010. GAZETTE notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

The OBITUARIES e-mail address is obituaries@independent.co.uk

### ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron, attends the Cornwall Rugby Football Union's Quarter Final Match of the Rugby Football Union County Championships against Hampshire at Redruth Rugby Football Club, Cornwall.

**Changing of the Guard**  
TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. No 7 Squadron of the Life Guards mounts the Company Colours at the Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Coldstream Guards. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

### Forthcoming marriages

**Mr J. W. K. Lambert and Miss M. B. Spicer**

The engagement is announced between Jason, son of the late Dr K.C. Lambert and Mrs E.D. Lambert, of Cambridgeshire, and Mary, daughter of Mr David Bechene and the Hon Mrs Spicer, of West Sussex.

### Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Peter Allis, golfer and television commentator, 67; Sir Philip Bailhache, Bailiff of Jersey, 52; Sir Peter Buxton, former chairman, Hawker Siddeley, 73; Miss Stephanie Becham, actress, 49; Mr Alfred Burke, actor, 80; Mr John Carson, actor, 71; Mr Robin Cook MP Foreign Secretary, 52; Maj-Gen Edwin Foster, 84; Lord Garel-Jones, former MP, 57; Mrs Helen Grindrod QC, former Crown Court Recorder, 62; Sir Anthony Havelock-Allan, film producer, 94; Admiral Sir Peter Herbert, 94; Duke of Edinburgh's Award, 61; Professor Maxwell Irvine, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham University, 59; Mr Jeremy Lancaster, chairman and managing director, Wolsley-Hughes, 62; Mr Barry McGuigan, boxer, 37; Mr Martin Marriott, former Headmaster, Canford School, 66; Mr Brian Moore, football commentator, 66; Mr Robin Phillips, actor and director, 56; Mr Peter Stothard, Editor, the Times, 47; Sir John Swire, hon president, John Swire and Sons, 71; Vice-Admiral Sir James Weatherall, Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, 62; Sir Michael Young-Herries, former chairman, Royal Bank of Scotland Group, 75.

29 FEBRUARY: Mr Joss Ackland, actor, 70; Mr Mario Andretti, grand prix driver, 58; Sir David Beattie, former Governor General of New Zealand, 74; Mr Gretchen Christopher, rock singer, 58; Lt-Gen Sir Rodrick Cordy-Simpson, Deputy Force Commander, Bosnia Hercegovina, 54; Baroness Dunn, former chairman, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 58; Mr Anthony Lingard, former Director-General, Sir John Ambulance Association, 62; Mr Alan Loveday, violinist, 70; Mlle Michele

Morgan, actress, 78; Mr Albert Welling, actor, 46.

TOMORROW: Mr Harry Belafonte, entertainer, 71; Mr David Broome, show jumper, 58; Mr Douglas Bunn, founder, All-England Jumping Course, Hickstead, 70; Sir Robert Calderwood, former chief executive, Strathclyde Regional Council, 66; Mr Nigel Cowley, cricketer, 45; Mr Roger Daltrey, singer and actor, 54; Mr Andrew Faulds, former MR 75; Sir Allan Green QC, former Director of Public Prosecutions, 63; Air Chief Marshal Sir Lewis Hedges, former Deputy C-in-C Allied Forces, Central Europe, 80; Mr Martyn Jones MP, 51; Sir Michael Kerr, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 77; Professor James Lister, paediatrician, 75; Mrs Patricia Metham, Head, Rose-dale School, 53; Mr John Napier, stage designer, 54; Mr Mike Read, Olympic athlete, 42; Maj-Gen Philip Tower, former Commandant, Royal Military Academy, 81; Mr Brian Waites, golfer, 58; Sir Gerald Whent, chief executive, Rascal Telecom plc, 71.

### Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Sir John Tenniel, artist and illustrator, 1820; Linus Carl Pauling, double Nobel prizewinner, 1901. Deaths: Henry James, novelist, 1916; Ruby Ethel Keeler, actress, 1993. On this day: Lady Smith was relieved, 1900; the last British troops left India, 1948; a general election in Britain resulted in no overall majority, 1974. Today is the Feast Day of the Martyrs of the Plague at Alexandria, St Hilarius, pope, St Lupinus, St Oswald of Worcester, St Proterius and St Romanus.

TOMORROW: Births: Frédéric François (Frédéric Francis), Chopin, composer, 1810; Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, architect, 1812; James David Graham Niven, actor, 1910. Deaths: Thomas Campion, poet and composer, 1620; George Herbert, clergyman and poet, 1633; Gabriele D'Annunzio, poet, politician and playwright, 1938. On this day: Vasco da Gama discovered Mozambique, 1498. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Aubin or Albanus of Angers, St David or Dewi, St Felix III, Pope, St Rudesind or Rosendo and St Swithbert.

## OBITUARIES

### Peter Sichel

PETER SICHEL was an English gentleman in Bordeaux. He had only been in Bordeaux for 13 years when he was elected President of the Bordeaux Wine Merchants Association in 1972.

In the Bordeaux establishment's notoriously closed community, this was a considerable achievement in itself. But he soon found himself embroiled in the intricacies of the Bordeaux wine fraud of 1973 which had involved fraud and corruption following the worldwide collapse of the 1972 vintage. In the event he won enormous respect for the diplomacy and skill with which he handled one of Bordeaux's worst ever crises.

Peter Sichel was born in Hampstead, north London, to the Anglo-French branch of an influential wine-trade family, whose involvement in wine dates back to mid-18th-century Germany. The German branch became famous for the development of the Blue Nun brand, through Walter Sichel in Britain, and Peter's cousin Peter Max Sichel in America. Peter Sichel's great-grandfather established the Sichel office in Bordeaux in 1883, initially as a branch of the family firm, H. Sichel & Söhne, based in Mainz in Germany.

At first dividing his time between Bordeaux and the UK,

Sichel eventually settled in Bordeaux after meeting his wife, Diana, a son of the Heathcoat-Amory family. One of his major achievements was to put the ancient Margaux property, Château d'Angludet, on the Bordeaux wine map. Bought in 1961 as a virtual ruin after the devastating frosts of 1956 (it produced just four barrels of wine in that legendary vintage), d'Angludet today has become one of the most sought after *cru bourgeois* clarets.

He was also the major shareholder in Château Palmer, in which his father, Allan Sichel, invested in 1938, with three other Bordeaux families. Considered folly at the time, the investment took 20 years to show a return. Today, Château Palmer is widely regarded as one of the superstars of Bordeaux's constellation of *cru classés*.

Sichel maintained the tradition started by his father, whose *Penguin Book of Wines* was published in 1965, of releasing an annual report on the new Bordeaux vintage. *The Sichel Vintage and Market Report* was eagerly awaited by the wine trade as much for its detailed factual content as for its insights into the state of the market and Sichel's own wry comments on his current *bête noire*, whether it be the encroachment of New World

wines or the fickle British wine journalist.

Peter Sichel was one of a rare breed in Bordeaux who managed successfully to combine the separate roles of merchant and château-owner. A strong believer in the business sense of adding value to the product, he was in fact the first wine merchant to become a wine maker, establishing a winery, the Cave Bel-Air, in 1967.

Although he had his hands full with his own projects, he still found time to become President in 1988 of the powerful association of top châteaux, the Union des Grands Crus, a phoenix which arose from the ashes of the 1973 crash. At a time when the New World was beginning to emerge as a competitive force to be reckoned with, his vision as an ambassador for Bordeaux and its traditional, old-world values was much respected.

In the face of stiff competition from the New World, he always championed the very French notion of *terroir*. In his view, the location of the vineyard stamps a wine with its own very distinctive character as against what he saw as the anonymity of varietal wines from the New World. "Character comes from the *terroir*, but quality depends on the wine-making," said Sichel. He ad-



Sichel: a wine enthusiast with vision

mired, perhaps even envied, the marketing skills of the New World, wishing French wines could employ similar skill and techniques.

In 1987, he launched his own brand, Sirius, in response to the success of New World brands on export markets. He was unrelenting in his pursuit of the Sichel brand name. After a *Which? Wine Monthly* report on Bordeaux Rouge which had criticised a number of his wines, he physically pursued the journalist in question at a London tasting, brandishing a corkscrew.

Sichel was a wine enthusiast with vision. Not content to sit on his Bordeaux laurels, he invested in the Domaine du Révérend estate at Cucugnan in the Corbières in 1989, and in the following year he bought another estate, Domaine du Trillou. As he approached retirement Corbières became his viticultural mistress. It was a challenge for a man with such deep faith in the properties of *terroir* to invest in the Languedoc-Roussillon, a region with no track record of great vineyard sites.

He and his wife Diana had five sons, all involved in the business today, and a daughter. "Our strength today is that we have five sons in the firm," said Sichel proudly shortly before he died. When the British journalist Nicholas Faith recently told him he thought his son Ben was making better wine at Château d'Angludet than he ever had, Peter Sichel smiled with relief, happy to acknowledge that his children had well and truly taken over the mantle.

Anthony Ros

Peter Allan Sichel, wine merchant and winemaker: bo London 19 September 1931; married 1962 Diana Heathcoat-Amory (five sons, one daughter); di Bordeaux, France 22 February 1998.

# THE INDEPENDENT

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## The Murdoch mask slips

THANKS TO the courage and sense of honour of the publishing editor Stuart Proffitt, Rupert Murdoch has been found out. Mr Proffitt, senior editor at the Murdoch subsidiary HarperCollins, refused to lie to Chris Patten, the last Governor of Hong Kong, about the real reason that Mr Patten's book about the Far East was being withdrawn. Which was that Mr Murdoch is so driven by greed in fostering his media interests in China that he wouldn't risk even a remote connection with a book which might criticise one of the most repressive Communist regimes in the world.

One passage leaps out from the anxious memo from Eddie Bell, chairman of HarperCollins, questioning the decision by his New York bosses to ditch the Patten book. It is the one in which Mr Bell refers to Mr Murdoch's description of the book as having "negative aspects". The phrase – which would be hilarious if it were not so chilling – has about it the wholly appropriate ring of the totalitarian Communist regime which Mr Murdoch is now single-mindedly courting. Indeed Mr Murdoch has emerged as the ultimate capitalist – which is to say a capitalist without principles, easily prepared to exchange, when it suits him, the standards of liberal democracy for those of a brutally repressive form of perverted Marxism-Leninism.

The British political leader at whose feet Mr Murdoch worshipped most actively before his marriage of convenience with Tony Blair was Margaret Thatcher. But to her great credit the Thatcher stance was as consistent towards Peking as it was to pre-Gorbachev Moscow. She never flinched, for example, from backing Mr Patten's decision as Governor of Hong Kong to stand up for democracy in the colony. We knew, by contrast, that Mr Murdoch took a coldly pragmatic view – stopping the BBC in 1994 from broadcasting on his Far East satellite company Star TV because free reporting threatened his China interests. But then we have discovered that



there was still more to learn about Mr Murdoch: there is very little that he will not do to increase his money and power. To borrow a phrase from his adopted country, this is "kiss up, kick down" on a now global scale. He kow-tows to Peking, while stamping vigorously on the testimony of one Britain's biggest and most intelligent public servants.

The latest evidence of his bullying and the morally indefensible demands it makes on his employees has an importance which goes well beyond the damage he has inflicted on the publishing house of HarperCollins. For the more Mr Murdoch's methods and goals are exposed, the more they raise questions about the cosiness of the relationship he enjoys with the Labour government. The suspicion is growing that Mr Murdoch's influence can be detected in several aspects of government policy: the refusal to tackle predatory pricing, where Mr Murdoch's own interests are clear; union recognition; the Prime Minister's aversion to any form of privacy legislation; and the Government's caution on EMU, to name but four. His influence may in some instances be exaggerated: certainly Mr Blair hasn't bought into the Murdoch paranoia about Europe, though his reluctance to contemplate an EMU referendum this side of a general election certainly reflects a fear of how the Murdoch papers would respond if he did. Even on predatory pricing Blair allies continue to insist that the Prime Minister has formed his own view on what mechanisms it would, and would not, be right to include in the Competition Bill. But all this would more convincing if amid all the favours the Murdoch media grant New Labour – most recently *The Sun's* gung-ho coverage of Mr Blair's conduct of the Gulf crisis, and BSkyB's sponsorship of the Dome – ministers could point to just one policy which adversely affects Mr Murdoch's designs.

The point about the HarperCollins saga is that there are some clear good guys – Mr Patten, Mr Proffitt – and one clear bad guy – Mr Murdoch. The Prime Minister would no doubt say that the internal affairs of Mr Murdoch's media empire are no business of his. But it has been illuminating about the kind of man Mr Murdoch is. We thought Mr Blair was on the side of the good guys. It must be time for him to reassess his relationship with the one man who emerges from this sorry tale without a shred of credit.

## BBC risks contempt of Parliament

IT'S TIME to put the brakes on James Boyle. Mr Boyle, controller of BBC Radio 4, apparently thinks *Yesterday in Parliament* is "boring" and should instantly be shunted off to the long-wave frequency. This is one of a series of changes in parliamentary and political programming, which also includes moving the half hour *Week in Westminster* from Saturday morning to a graveyard slot on Thursday evening, when only the most devoted politics junkies are likely to tune in.

The first problem with this strategy – which has greatly upset MPs – is that it is not borne out by the facts. *Yesterday in Parliament* attracts an audience of 1.3 million, while according to a BBC spokesman *The Week in Westminster* is listened to by 658,000 people on a Saturday morning. Will Wyatt, chief executive of BBC Broadcasting, and Matthew Bannister, managing director of BBC Radio Network, irritated MPs on Thursday by being unable to give figures for the drop when the late night *Today in Parliament* went to wave from FM. The audience more than halved, to around 160,000. And search carried out by the rival BBC News Directorate showed that listeners feel very warmly about both *Yesterday in Parliament* and *The Week in Westminster*. Which is not surprising. Both programmes have an appeal which casual listeners stay with them once they have happened upon them. The BBC has mishandled these changes, and not only by failing to convince MPs. It's far from certain that Mr Boyle would attract a bigger audience by getting rid of the parliamentary programmes he regards as being his way. But whether he would or not, the BBC has a public service role. In an age of spin and pre-packaged political announcements, Parliament remains the one theatre in which the executive is publicly and daily led to account, however imperfectly. The point of these programmes is that they are enjoyed by a surprisingly sizeable audience – more than half of whom would not hunt for them on another channel but enjoy them if they don't have to. If covering Parliament with programming that holds listeners isn't part of the BBC's remit, it's difficult to see what is.



Swan up: one of the Australian black swans that decorate St James's Park in central London

Photograph: Brian Harris

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171 293 2534

### Countryside March

I REGARD myself as country born and bred. The myth is being put about by the organisers of the Countryside March of a country population that is very different from the town one and of one mind on a broad range of issues.

Modern developments, mainly the car, have made country life little different from town life. The principal difference for many is that the car journeys between work, shopping, school and leisure in the country are made at higher speed and over longer distances. Many country dwellers are not directly involved in farming. Even many farmers, especially those without livestock, now live essentially urban lives. Their food comes from the supermarket (you cannot eat barley, sugar beet or oilseed rape) and their farms, with modern machinery, impose no significantly different hours from any other industrial process.

The real dichotomy over the countryside is in attitude towards it. Some, whether from the town or country, see it as a cultural asset, the thing that both supports life and makes it worthwhile. They want access to it, they want it to grow whole some food. They want it to be rich, varied, and beautiful in its landscape, plant and animal life. Above all they want it to be there in the future.

The other group sees it as a financial asset and private playground. It is to be pillaged one way or another. It can be to grow, industrially, unsustainable crops. It can be to "develop" into a sprawling townscape. It can be to use as an exclusive sports ground.

CADLEY  
Market Rasen, Lincolnshire

YOUR call for Tony Blair to "stand up for townies" (leading article, 20 February) is timely. The tiny minority who enjoy the privilege of living in the countryside should not be allowed to monopolise the rural heritage of the nation.

The urban majority are entitled to a view on national issues like the cruelty of bloodsports, the environmental devastation caused by modern farming and the exclusion of walkers from their homeland. The huge subsidy they provide to landowners both as taxpayers and food consumers only underlines this entitlement. Previous Labour governments have attempted to get to grips with the abuses of power of the rural regime, only to be knocked off course by vigorous lobbying manoeuvres like this coming Sunday's Countryside March.

In the past, the media have been as susceptible as politicians to the arrogant claims and misrepresentations of the rural elite. If *The Independent* is subjecting rural bluster to the scrutiny the press gives other propaganda, its voice is valuable indeed.

However, you need not understate the urban case. Access, for example, is not simply a problem in "pockets" of upland England, as the landowners would have you believe. Exclusion is the rule, not the exception. Most of Britain's woods and meadows, downs and moors, riverbanks and lakesides are out of bounds to walkers and picnickers. You salute the efforts of local councils to open the countryside, yet the access agreements they have managed to wring out of

landowners cover less than 0.5 per cent of the land surface. You rightly applaud the National Trust's efforts, but the trust (and its Scottish equivalent) own just 1.3 per cent of the UK.

A right of access is the only thing that will return the countryside to the people and the present government must not be allowed to slide out of its commitment to introduce one.

MARION SHOARD  
Dorking, Surrey

ANDREAS Wittam Smith (Comment, 24 February) characterises "The right [of country landowners] to forbid walkers to roam freely across their estates" as a defence of a liberty. If ever there was a good example of one person's freedom being another's repression, this is it.

The "right to privacy on one's own property" is only "a powerful and long-established rule" as far as one's home is concerned. For land it is a comparatively modern concept. Land was once regarded as a communal asset, over which most members of the community owned some rights. The idea that ownership of one of those rights, the freehold of the soil, should convey the right to exclude everyone else would have seemed monstrously perverse and unjust to our ancestors.

Unregulated access to land is now neither possible nor desirable, because of the immense population of our island, but the limitations of access should be determined by what gives the greatest benefit to the greatest number, not on a false understanding of the very nature of land ownership.

KHAGETT  
Sheffield

ANDREAS Whittam Smith's article appears well balanced, until we get to "If we stopped sheltering agri-

culture from market forces we would get much cheaper food."

I farm cows for milk, hens for eggs, and wheat to feed the hens. "Market forces" have reduced the milk price to farmers by 20 per cent without any noticeable drop in dairy product prices. Wheat is now trading at £80 per tonne instead of £110 just over a year ago. Is your bread cheaper? The farmer is getting less than 40p per dozen for eggs sold in supermarkets for £1.20 per dozen. Romanian and Hungarian chickens are being imported at such low prices that I am being offered, 2p per bird for end-of-lay chickens that five months ago would have made 14p per bird, and a year ago 38p.

We are, on top of all these problems, being attacked for hunting with hounds, are expected to give unlimited access, and are being vilified for making fields into an economic size with which to compete with the world price of food. Now do you see why we are lighting beacons and marching?

ROGER STRATTON  
Keynsham, Bristol

OUR countryside and its traditions are under pressure from every quarter. Those who live and work in the countryside sense that their livelihoods are at stake, especially given the apparent apathy of the Government, its ignorance of rural matters, and continuing pressure from Europe. This is about jobs – for blacksmiths, farm staff, gamekeepers, gillies, and many in related industries, especially tourism.

I would urge those who live, work, or derive pleasure from the countryside to give the countryside march on Sunday 1 March their support.

ANDREW DINGWALL-FORDYCE  
Convener  
Scottish Landowners' Federation  
Edinburgh

### LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number  
Fax: 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

### PICTURE OF THE DAY

#### Children in slavery

A FEW years ago I spent several months in Pakistan, where I was born. I was given wonderful hospitality. But I was also taken on a visit to some brickfields ("Film exposes child slavery", 24 February).

Two things come back to mind that seem especially poignant. One is the smile that an eight- or nine-year-old was able to give me as he loaded his man-sized barrow with clay; the other is the sight of a little baby, asleep on the bare earth in the shade of a pile of raw bricks waiting for the kiln; it was likely to be the only time of rest and peace that the child was going to have until death.

Something must be done about the brickfields and the whole child labour scene in Pakistan, but it needs to be done with sensitivity and understanding, or matters will be made worse. Working children (and bonded labourers generally) are so enmeshed in the Pakistan economy that it will need much painstaking work to bring them their freedom. The tiny Christian church in Pakistan is trying to alleviate the situation, with great courage but minuscule resources, and so too are some Muslims and human rights groups, but they too are small in number.

The Rev BA HOPKINSON  
Middlesbrough

#### Morning Star

You report (26 February) a claim in the *Morning Star* that the Communist Party of Britain has been in talks with Arthur Scargill about the possibility of its party, the Socialist Labour Party, buying the paper.

A recent informal discussion between representatives of the two parties did not include any such proposal. The *Morning Star* is owned by a readers' co-operative (the People's Press Printing Society) and is not the Communist Party's to sell. Nor would we support any such move.

ROBERT GRIFFITHS  
General Secretary  
Communist Party of Britain  
London N1

#### Working mothers

IF tax payers have to bear the cost of childcare subsidies for those mothers who work to pay school fees (letter, 25 February), at least they will be relieved of the costs of educating those mothers' children.

KATHARINE WAIT  
Duns Tew, Oxfordshire

#### Dome thoughts

I SYMPATHISE with Mary Hodges (letter, 26 February; "Too old for the Dome?") but have to disagree. I will be a mere stripling of 45 in the year 2000 and I think the contents of the Millennium Dome are designed for those aged 25 or less.

KEITH HART  
Farnborough, Hampshire

YOU ACCUSE the Prime Minister of "preachy and chiding" about the Millennium Dome (leading article, 25 February). Give the man a chance; it's what he does best.

JOHN RIMMER  
London SW14



Bob Hoskins: A Cockney feared

### QUOTE UNQUOTE

The reason I've been so successful is that I've just got on and done it. I've packed boxes and know VAT means value added tax, not vodka and tonic – Paul Smith, fashion icon

I bought an ice cream once. I honestly can't think of the others – Eddie George, Bank of England Governor, asked about occasions when he had been extravagant

It is an observable phenomenon in Northern Ireland – and elsewhere – that tension and violence tend to rise when compromise is in the air – Bertie Ahern, Irish Prime Minister

We had to stop them. Every tart in London was being presented – Princess Margaret, in a just-published comment on the abolition in the 1950s of the debutantes' royal presentation parties

As a nation, we are extremely good at producing an academic elite. But that elite has shown scant interest in training the rest of the workforce – John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB union

A bad night at the theatre is worse than anything: one squirms and writhes and wishes oneself dead – Ben Elton, playwright

In England, if I walk into someone's home and they don't know me, as soon as I open my mouth they look up the silver and send the women out of the way – Bob Hoskins, cockney actor

Nothing will ever turn William Hague into a leader. His only proposal is for endless consultations with the Tory rank and file. They will have to throw him out eventually, but there is nothing to be gained by consulting them beforehand as they are extremely stupid people – Auberon Waugh, writer

## Only the British know how to shrug off an arm-eating tiger



DAVID  
AARONOVITCH  
THE FALSE VIRTUE  
OF SANG-FROID

You don't have to do much to be a hero these days. Once upon a time heroism was the product of a conscious decision. Shall I jump into this raging torrent to rescue the drowning tot? Shall I stay in Khartoum and rally my troops, as the overwhelming forces of the Mahdi gather on the plain for the final assault? These were therefore acts of real bravery. The odds had been calculated; the hero pressed on regardless.

But in these debased times you can get the accolade for much more passive acts. The most common, of course, is not dying of cancer. If your tumour is malign and you do anything other than go into an immediate and terminal decline, then you are up there with Hector and Lysander. This week, however, such unconscious bravery made a hero out of 38-year-old Nigel Wesson, when he involuntarily lent a hand to a tiger. Soon we can expect a Queen's special award for all those who have lost a limb to a zoo animal.

To be fair to Mr Wesson, it was not so much the fact of his being injured by Rajah, Chippendale's largest Bengal tiger, that has made him a celebrity, but his reaction to it. For those unfamiliar with the story, Mr Wesson, a comparative newcomer to the world of tiger-tending, had been feeding the animals at Chippendale's training centre in Oxfordshire. Mr Wesson said he reached into Rajah's cage to close a partition. (He was, according to the circus, supposed to do this job with a long pole. Tigers, apparently, are at their most excited just after lunch. Men, of course, are the opposite. Oh well, Mr Wesson won't be making that mistake again in a hurry.)

Zoos and circuses have their own reasons for being thankful to Mr Wesson. He has supplied a bloody reminder to a blasé public that the animals on display are exotically and thrillingly violent.

More of us will now go to see them, hoping to experience that pleasurable frisson when the large caged cat turns to us and roars.

But, we British admire him for his sang-froid. Yesterday's *Mirror*, whose reporter had been to Mr Wesson's bedside, recounted the tale of "one pal who visited chirpy Nigel in hospital and revealed that the brave keeper had told him he was 'dying' for a pint of lager". Others commented that "he told us what had happened as if he'd just met us in the street". Though presumably he did not shake hands.

"It's just one of those things," Mr Wesson is reported as having said. No it isn't. It is a completely other thing, to be set alongside travelling on the roof of a train or stowing away in the landing gear of a jumbo jet. But we love this sang-froid. It seems to us to be the quintessence of Englishness. It could be Captain Oates on that terrible polar night in 1912. "I'm going out. I may be some time." Or Lord Uxbridge, to whom the Duke of Wellington turned at the height of the battle of Waterloo, and said, "By God sir, you've lost your leg!" To which Uxbridge replied, "By God sir, so I have!"

It is unimaginable that French people or Italians would behave in this way. Look at their footballers. And that rugby player who complained about having his ear bitten off wasn't English either.

Wouldn't we have thought more of him had he stayed on the pitch, and then at the final whistle – taxed with injury to his ear – put his hand to his head and replied, "What ear?"

Our ostensible reason for admiring such behaviour is that it represents calmness in a crisis and is therefore a more efficient response. The person with sang-froid will keep the passengers of the stricken liner from panicking, supervising their orderly descent into the lifeboats. Nor will he or she rush for the exits when the fire alarm goes off in the crowded cinema, but will remain seated enjoying the popcorn and Kia-Ora.

This is actually nonsense. Sang-froid requires the person that possesses it to behave as if there were no billowing ocean and no imminent threat of immolation. The last person whom one wants next to one in a crisis is a sang-froidist. First they will attempt to ignore what is going on. Then they are obliged to minimise it. And finally, as the flames lick around their trouser legs, they will attempt to reassure you that they feel fine. They take suspect packages to lost property.

In some cases this may simply be stupidity or a lack of imagination. Ronald Reagan, when he was the victim of an assassination attempt, is said to have quipped to the doctors: "Don't tell Nancy." Some believe that he simply couldn't comprehend that there was any chance of him being very seriously injured; indeed, he just hadn't thought about it.

Maybe. It is more likely though, that sang froid is simply an affectation. This is about style, about wit, about maintaining control. Oscar Wilde, had he just lost his arm to a tiger, would have behaved in a similar way to Mr Wesson. Was it not Oscar who said that when the final trumpet sounded, and he and Bosie were lying on their Elysian couches, he would pretend not to hear it.

## Don't tell me to stay home and watch World Cup football on the telly



There are times, says Trevor Phillips, when it is necessary to be just one among many in a crowd

Anyone who has to use the London Underground or a crowded commuter train each day will have a sneaking sympathy with the former Tory minister who despaired of having to share trains with "dreadful human beings". Social we may be, but the closer you get to someone else's armpits, the less appealing the charm of the crowd becomes. Yet, later this year, many of us, including yours truly, will shell out the sort of money that could keep an entire African village going for a year, just for the pleasure of spending two or three days jammed into the biggest crowd on earth.

World Cup games will be witnessed by total crowds of up to two million. But worldwide, the organisers are boasting a likely global audience of more than a billion for some individual games – probably those involving the Brazilians. The TV spectators will, of course, have all the advantages: they can watch in the comfort of their own homes, they do not have to travel to the stadium, they can see the action replays on those dodgy offside decisions, they get John Motson's commentary, plus the saintly Ruud Gullit's reflections on the art of soccer – and you don't have to pay a penny extra. The cost of black market tickets, given the miserly allocation to British fans, will no doubt be astronomical.

The Home Secretary estimates that demand might well outstrip supply by 1,000 to one. To his credit he kept a straight face as he said this, though he is probably feeling pretty smug, being almost the only Cabinet

minister given permission to attend the tournament (Mr Blair desperately wants to avoid charges of ministerial junketing). For good measure, Jack Straw also pointed out that the place would be full of hooligans, and that he is going to the lengths of setting up a Hooligan Hotline, so that we can shop the troublemakers in advance. So what on earth is the attraction of going to France, having to eat their horses, listen to their awful pop music, and having to pay several hundred smackers for the pleasure? In the modern world, shouldn't these violent, expensive, unpleasant, mass gatherings be a thing of the past?

Most of today's major cable and entertainment companies reckon so. They will show you their promotional reels if you stand around their lobby for more than 30 seconds; one of the largest outfits conjures up a vision of a world in which you can shop, bank, learn, laugh, talk, view, play games – almost every imaginable activity – through your computer and the Internet. This is the brave new world predicted in an obscure but telling science fiction short story written nearly half a century ago. It is set in a time, far into the future, when human beings need never move from their own comfortable, padded, cubbyholes. Food, TV, virtual reality vacations, education, company (real or robotic) can be provided instantly at the flick of a switch in your specially fitted arm rest. Bodily waste and fluids disappear conveniently; repairs are carried out by machines. Reproduction can

be performed by some distant laboratory somewhere; death, as a ritual of collective mourning, is unknown. In this world, people never need to meet. Except that, as ever, there is a rebel who decides to try to meet his mother, only to discover to his shock what he had never recognised in himself: the human form had become so attenuated that she was become little more than a head with a couple of shrivelled, useless body parts tacked on.

Though the permanently sealed cocoon might be a humane way of solving the problem of the Gallagher brothers, the closer that we come to this sort of nirvana, the less attractive it seems to be overall. It is not so long ago that we were being scared to death by the Cassandras who claimed that the video shop would prove to be the assassin of the cinema: we would all be sitting at home watching tapes rather than going out to the movies. Precisely the reverse has happened; it is the video rental business that now seems in trouble, as we once again trumpet the renaissance of the British big screen.

In spite of the fact we can now experience most great events on our own private ground, we consistently choose to join the crowd. This weekend, a hundred thousand or so countryside supporters will be on the streets of London for a collective ramble; last year, hundreds of thousands came to London for the funeral of Princess Diana; three years ago, virtually the whole nation found itself in

hugo parties to mark the 50th anniversary of VE Day, and Euro 96 caught the imagination in a way few predicted. I need hardly labour the growing attraction of our most popular national festival, the Notting Hill Carnival, to make the point.

It is not an adequate explanation to say that human beings are social beings; we can be social in small numbers, at weddings, funerals and christenings. But we like the crowd more and more rather than less and less. There isn't a specific number that makes a crowd; but I guess that we are talking about those moments when numbers are large enough to allow the individual to be completely anonymous, to shed his or her own personal baggage for a moment, and to merge with others, many of whom we may not know.

Modern Britain, it would seem, wants to share the experience – whatever it is – with as many others as we can. In times when this kind of experience is sought more than ever, it feels odd that the controversy over the biggest single national event that will occur in most of our lifetimes has become so focused on a building. The Dome matters, but the question we will ask in the next century is where were you when the clock struck

12 on December 31, 1999? So what should we be doing on that day and night?

I've argued before in this column that we should prepare to hold the biggest party ever seen on that night – linking up hundreds of sites (football grounds, concert halls, shopping centres, churches across the nation) by satellite. Local artists and performers should be there to amuse the crowds, and there should be bread and circuses aplenty.

Chris Smith announced yesterday that £100m of the lottery proceeds would be going into festival-type events. That's good; but these should not be restricted to village fairs and parties. There should be a right old knees-up, of the kind that no technology, no matter how sophisticated, can provide. Only the unique human experience of being in a crowd can give us that feeling. A good chunk of the cash should be allocated to ensure that our memory of that night is not just the countdown to the new millennium, however beautifully enunciated by Tony, or Cilla or whoever; it should be the mother of all celebrations where we can eat, drink, roar songs together and dance pressed "Back to back/Belly to belly", as we Caribbeans would put it.

## Living in the country doesn't mean I like hunters or hunting



WENDY  
LEAVESLEY

Not every farmer wants a mob of horse and hounds crossing her land

I live on a farm in Warwickshire and would dearly love to see an end to foxhunting. The Warwickshire Hunt have trespassed on my land, even though I have made it quite clear they have no right of access. Just this January, eight hounds ran through my field of pregnant ewes. If sheep in this condition are made to run, it can cause the lambs to abort.

Hunts have paid compensation to many farmers for losses of this kind, including their own members. One of them told me that she had re-

ceived compensation when two of her pedigree Charolais ewes aborted their lambs as a result of trespass by the Shropshire Hunt. She sympathised with my position but told me that getting a legal injunction against the hunt would be futile: unless the hunt gives a 10-mile exclusion zone to property, it cannot avoid trespass. Why should hunts be above the law?

The hunt disrupts the lives of working farmers, they trespass and they damage property. Supporters of this bloodsport claim that this is a "town versus country" issue but I have certainly never had a problem with so-called "townies" invading my property and allowing their dogs to roam uncontrolled among the sheep.

I have had no written apology from the hunt, nor payment for damage incurred to a fence. On one particular occasion, in November 1996, the hunt's horses and hounds galloped across the field newly seeded with grass and their excuse was that they had to follow the hounds which had run along the nearby rail track – which in itself is a civil offence. Their unexpected presence had made my pony jump out of his paddock into a neighbour's field, which had unfenced boundaries, on to the road and rail track. My pony

is difficult to catch and if I had not been at home to rescue him, he would have been seriously injured or even killed from remaining loose. If I had been informed that the hunt was in the area, he would have been safely stabled.

On that same day, the hounds also invaded my neighbour's wildlife sanctuary and scattered her birds in all di-



rections, causing enormous distress. The British Field Sports Society have told me their hounds "only" kill five domestic cats a year. Very reassuring – so my farm cat is also at risk. I work from home and enjoy the peace and quiet of the countryside. We should receive postcards to inform us when there is a meet in the area, but they are not always sent –

mostly I receive a warning call from a neighbour. Therefore, when the Warwickshire Hunt gallops down the road, the feeling is one of being ambushed and the trespass feels like a physical violation.

This may sound dramatic, but when you are on foot, against 30 horse-backed riders, hunt supporters and a similar number of hounds, you are outnumbered

by a "mob". The fact is that I cannot prevent them from killing a fox on my property, nor can I prevent them from invading my land. I have sent them maps, I have telephoned them, written to them by recorded delivery and yet my civil rights are still violated.

I have to be home on the day of the hunt in order to protect my beloved countryside from

being invaded by individuals and animals whose activity I find repulsive and abhorrent. And I remain under threat twice a week right through the hunting season.

Many supporters of Michael Foster's bill to end fox hunting have chosen to defend hunting on the basis that a ban would infringe civil liberties. What about the rights of the individual whose property and livestock is constantly under threat of trespass and mayhem? Who is defending those civil rights? It is laughable that the hunt supporters include me, a country dweller, as a supporter of the Countryside Alliance campaign. The Countryside Alliance does not speak for the majority of people in the countryside. In fact a recent MORI poll showed that 57 per cent of people living in rural areas support the Foster Bill. How dare the Countryside Alliance purport to speak on my behalf – nothing could be further from the truth.

As an arable farmer, foxes are very welcome on my farm: they kill rabbits and rats which can cause economic loss. Foxes are also a beautiful sight in the wild. Small lambs that die in a field overnight are occasionally picked up by foxes as an easy meal. Then they get

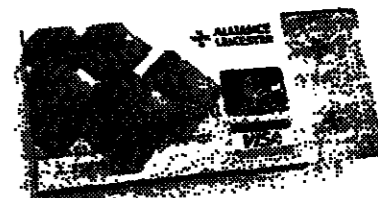
blamed for killing lambs which have died from natural causes.

The farmer who complains of a fox in his chicken house is blaming the fox for his own incompetence. It is very simple to safeguard livestock from any threat a fox may bring to the farm. Decent animal husbandry takes care of that. If an individual fox is a pest, there is a cost effective and humane way of killing: it takes the form of a gun and a skilled marksman. I cannot imagine ever having a fox population in my area that would necessitate a cull, but even if this were to come about, I do not believe that 30 horses, a pack of hounds and a man in a pink jacket blowing a horn would be the most effective form of pest control!

I am a member of the Countryside Landowners Association, which supports foxhunting. They advocate the freedom of choice for landowners to decide whether or not they will allow hunting on their land. The reality, however, is that I have chosen to be no part of this activity; but if a fox runs on to my land the hunt are unable to call the hounds off the scent.

I wish every success to Michael Foster's Bill to give us country dwellers a peaceful life free from these hooligans on horseback.

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## Flextech close to BSkyB supply deal

By Peter Thal Larsen

British Sky Broadcasting, the satellite television group, is close to a deal with Flextech, the programme provider, to carry Flextech's channels on BSkyB's digital satellite service when it launches in June.

Discussions have been taking place this week between Mark Booth, BSkyB's chief executive, and Roger Luard, his counterpart at Flextech. Sources close to the discussions think a deal could be signed within the next few weeks. BSkyB and Flextech both refused to comment.

A deal with Flextech would give BSkyB access to a number of channels based on BBC programmes. Flextech has an exclusive 30-year joint venture to package programmes from the BBC as commercial television channels for broadcast via cable and satellite.

The venture, known as UKTV, currently supplies UK Gold, a channel based on old BBC comedies and soap operas, to BSkyB's existing satellite service. Another three channels - UK Arena, UK Horizons and UK Style - are currently available via cable.

Under the terms of the deal, however, BSkyB would make all four channels available to subscribers to its digital service. Viewers would also have access to Flextech's other channels, including Bravo and Living, which are already available via BSkyB's existing service.

UKTV is also planning to launch another four channels, including a music package and a sports entertainment offering, all of which would be made available to BSkyB digital subscribers.

The deal will provide a boost to both BSkyB and Flextech. BSkyB needs to offer a good range of programmes when it launches its 200-channel digital service in

June. Although it already plans to offer premium sports and movie channels, its current offering is short on basic channels which do not require extra payment. Meanwhile, Flextech needs access to as many digital television viewers as it can reach.

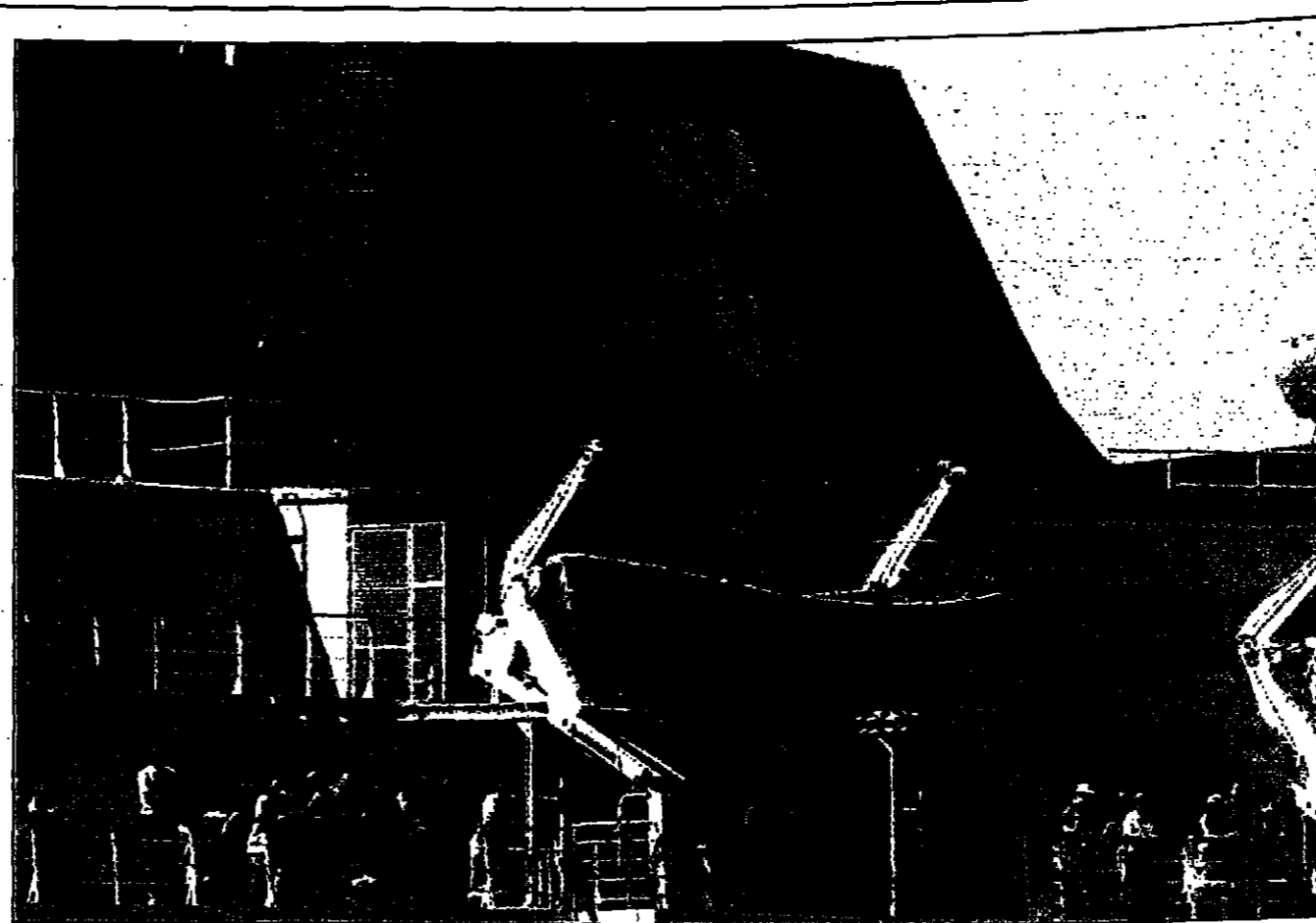
The move is likely to give BSkyB the necessary credibility to attract other programme packages from other suppliers.

Flextech has already agreed to supply a package of four channels including UK Gold and UK Horizons to British Digital Broadcasting, the joint venture between Granada and Carlton which is planning to launch in the autumn.

Previous discussions between BSkyB and Flextech are thought to have foundered on the issue of price. In the meantime, Flextech has been exploring other options to get access to British viewers. These included exploring launching its own package of programmes, which would be marketed separately. The company also suggested a deal which would see it mount a reverse takeover of BDB, thereby giving it an equity stake in the broadcaster and providing BDB with a stock market listing.

However, the deal would make those moves unnecessary. It is also likely to be enthusiastically received by shareholders in both companies. Flextech shares ended the day up 21p at 525p, while BSkyB shares put on 3p to 393p. Both companies' share prices have been under pressure recently as investors fretted about the prospects for digital television.

Meanwhile, Castle Transmission International (CTI), the company which handles television transmission for the BBC and a number of radio and mobile phone groups, yesterday said it planned to invest £100m in broadcasting capacity after it was confirmed as the supplier of the BBC's Digital Terrestrial Television service.



Three years' grace: Merged company may escape regulatory controls on ferries such as P & O's 'The Pride of Cherbourg'

## Beckett delays cap on P&O Channel prices

By Terry Macalister

P&O and Stena, the cross-Channel ferry giants, will not face a cap on the prices they can charge on their cross-Channel short routes for at least three years, it emerged yesterday as the Government gave the joint venture the green light. The companies expect the ferry line to commence business on 10 March.

The surprise decision by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, follows a lobbying campaign by Lord Sterling, P&O chairman, to treat the ferry firms more leniently. Mrs Beckett said in November that a price cap would be triggered by the end of duty free sales in 1999. But yesterday these requirements were watered down.

The price cap, which does not apply to

freight, will only commence in March 2001 and the European Commission can extend this date if it wishes.

The cap depends on duty free sales being abolished in 1999 and on P&O/Stena and Eurotunnel controlling between them 90 per cent of the market. Currently the three companies have an 82 per cent stake.

P&O and Stena will remove three of the 14 vessels they operate on three major routes including Dover-Calais. At least 500, mainly seafaring, jobs will be lost in the restructuring. P&O estimates the two ferry companies will save £75m but will take a £38m restructuring charge in 1998.

Russ Peters, head of P&O European Ferries (UK), will be managing director of the new entity owned, which is 60 per cent by

P&O and 40 per cent by Stena of Sweden. Joint chairmen Lord Sterling and Dan Sten Olsson welcomed the go-ahead which they have fought for since 1993.

They said in a joint statement: "This is excellent news. Any remaining uncertainty has now been removed."

The City gave the go-ahead a warm welcome, pushing up P&O's share price 7p to 777p. Eurotunnel saw the development as a good opportunity to raise prices.

For P&O, the joint venture is another step in a broader corporate restructuring that began in 1996. In a bid to bring return on capital up to 15 per cent, Lord Sterling has sold off property, floated off Bovis Homes, and established joint ventures for his bulk and container shipping arms.

## PanAm in talks to be airborne

By David Osborne  
in New York

Pan American World Airways, the airline that filed for bankruptcy in the US yesterday, is in discussions for refinancing to put the carrier back in the air.

"We are in discussion with interested parties," Chief Executive Officer David Bonnell said, after a hearing in a bankruptcy court in Miami.

It ceased all operations yesterday, stranding hundreds of passengers in New York and at its home-base of Miami.

Passengers arriving for flights yesterday were greeted by signs informing them of the cancellations and instructions on obtaining refunds. The airline carried about 5,000 passengers daily to 14 cities.

With its sky-blue logo and lettering, Pan Am will once again be absent from the skies. The latest version of Pan Am was created in 1996 as a domestic regional airline. Its owners and managers were relying in part on public goodwill towards a brand that evoked the pioneering days of flight.

Unfortunately, Pan Am also has one much darker association - with the 1988 Lockerbie disaster in Scotland. The tragedy contributed to the demise of the original Pan American which finally went out of business in 1991.

Aviation analysts yesterday said the carrier's main mistake was trying to establish itself as a major US airline, with cross-continent routes, too quickly. Pan Am was offering luxury service in wide-body Airbus aircraft, while trying to keep costs down to those of discount rivals.

The corporate parent remains alive, however, and "will continue to seek outside sources of financing, or a merger, to attempt to resuscitate the airline in the near future", a statement said.

Only a week ago, Pan Am attempted to staunch losses by grounding two Airbus aircraft and laying off 225 staff. It let go 550 workers last September when it acquired Carnival Air, a no-frills Miami carrier. Pan Am had hoped to gain sufficient critical mass with Carnival to compete better with rivals.

Before the bankruptcy announcement, shares in Pan Am were already at a paltry \$0.75 (45p), compared with a high of \$13.75, reached on 27 September 1996, one day after the carrier went public.

While industry consultants noted that US airlines have often gone into bankruptcy and re-emerged later - including Continental and TWA - there was scant optimism that the Pan Am planes would be in the air again in the near future.

## A & L blames mortgage slump on windfall effect

By Lea Paterson

Alliance & Leicester (A&L), the UK bank, pleased the City yesterday with a robust set of annual results. Underlying operating profit, which excludes non-recurring costs, rose 18 per cent to £423m. The increase comes despite a slump in the A&L's share of net mortgage lending in the second half of the year.

"It was a good set of figures, better than anticipated", said Inigo Eddberg, analyst at Panmure Gordon.

Some in the City were disappointed that A&L, which converted from a building society to a bank last spring, did not follow in the Woolwich's footsteps and issue a special dividend.

However, Peter White, A&L's chief executive, raised

hopes of a share buyback or a special dividend later in the year.

He stated the bank would first look to use its excess capital, which stands at around £700m, to fund organic growth or to make suitable acquisitions. "If we cannot use capital

effectively in this manner we will return it to shareholders", he said.

The A&L will ask its shareholders for the authority to buy back up to 10 per cent of its shares at its annual general meeting later this year.

Unlike many of its com-

petitors, the bank has no intention of expanding overseas. Richard Pym, finance director, said: "We've no European adventures planned... we've got so much to do in the UK".

Mr Pym said the most likely areas for acquisitions in the

coming year were life assurance and unit trusts.

The dividend rose 28 per cent to 14.4p per share, netting a minimum payout of £36 for those A&L investors who kept hold of their windfall shares. Yesterday the shares gained a further 18.5p to close at 965p.

The slump in the bank's net mortgage lending - which equals total (or gross) mortgage lending less mortgage repayments - in the second half of the year was attributed by Mr Pym to impact of conversion.

According to Mr Pym, A&L's share of net mortgage lending

fell because customers were using their windfall payments to partially pay back their mortgages.

The bank's share of net mortgage lending fell from 2.3 per cent in 1997 to 1.5 per cent in 1996.

A number of the recently converted building societies, such as the Woolwich, have reported similar slowdowns in net mortgage lending, and have claimed this was due to increases in mortgage repayments.

However, their competitors believe the slowdown reflects underlying uncompetitiveness, claiming the recently converted building societies have lost many customers in recent months.

These customers, it is said, were unwilling to change mortgage providers earlier in the year for fear of losing out on their free windfall shares.

## Lloyds TSB eyes up Crédit Lyonnais takeover bid

The banking sector was awash with merger rumours yet again yesterday. Lloyds TSB admitted to having run its ruler over Crédit Lyonnais, the French bank, and Hambros, the banking group, said it was in talks to sell its estate agency and insurance arms, writes Lea Paterson.

It also emerged there would be "significant redundancies" in Hambros' core banking operations following their sale to Société Générale de France.

In an interview with *Le Figaro*, the

French newspaper, Sir Brian Pitman, chairman of Lloyds TSB, said he would like to buy Crédit Lyonnais, but was put off by the regulatory and political climate in France. Sir Brian drew attention to France's "bureaucratic burden" and its inflexible labour market.

Lloyds has frequently expressed its desire for further acquisitions. At the presentation of the group's annual results a fortnight ago, Sir Brian said: "We are rapidly building up excess capital

which we would prefer to use to make an acquisition. We are generating more than £1bn in surplus funds."

Shares in Crédit Lyonnais hit a three-year high in Paris yesterday as analysts took stock of Sir Brian's comments. The Paris financial community was said to be cheered by the prospect that the French bank could attract quality buyers when it is eventually finally put up for sale. The French government has to dispose of its ma-

jority stake in the bank before the year 2000.

Meanwhile, Hambros, the banking group, said it was considering a number of expressions of interest in its remaining businesses - Hambros Countrywide, the estate agency, and Hambros Insurance Services Group.

The group also said it had completed the sale of its core banking businesses to Société Générale. The £300m sale was first announced in December.

## Trust Motor approach worries institutions

By Michael Harrison

INSTITUTIONAL investors in Trust Motor Group, the car distributor formerly known as Barr and Wallace Arnold, expressed concern yesterday after the company disclosed it had received a bid approach from its management priced at about the net asset value of the business.

The management team is led by Nicholas Barr who owns 1 per cent of the company. His brother Robert and Trust Motor's former chairman Malcolm Barr own a further 9 per cent.

The company said that, pro-

vided discussions reached a satisfactory conclusion, it expected an offer of around £220p valuing the company at £33m. Less than nine months ago, the shares were trading at 343p.

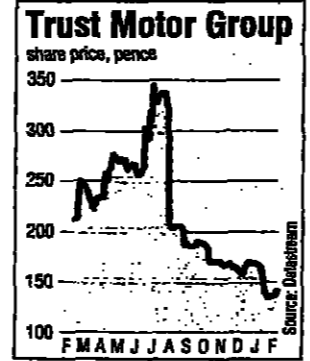
In August last year the company sold its Wallace Arnold coach tours business for £42m to a management buy-out team and paid out a 120p special dividend to shareholders costing £18m. Since then the shares have drifted down by more than 200p. Yesterday's bid announcement lifted the shares from 139.5p to 196.5p.

One large shareholder said:

"We will want to look at this deal very carefully to make sure shareholders are not being legged over."

Another institution said: "We will scrutinise the deal once it is in the open and if we don't feel it is a good price we will be looking for other buyers to step in."

Richard Bell, Trust Motor's finance director who is not part of the buy-out team, and the non-executive directors formed an independent committee to review the offer and asked its advisers Hambros to seek other indicative bids. As a result the independent directors are in discussions with one other potential purchaser



apart from the management team. Trust Motor operates a number of Ford, Vauxhall and Peugeot dealerships and bought a body repair business last December. In the half year to last June it made a £2.3m pre-tax profit on turnover of £122m.

## Argos investors unhappy about generous terms for departing chief

By Nigel Cope  
City Correspondent

INSTITUTIONAL investors in Argos are unhappy about the "overly generous" extra payments being made to Bob Stewart, the company's track record. But if the people responsible for that performance are going, that is a concern.

Argos has increased Mr Stewart's pay from £200,000 to £360,000 from April and is paying him a one-off bonus of £196,000.

One senior fund manager said the payments were surprisingly generous. "The sums they are handing over are quite extraordinary. They are putting

three weeks and a finance director who is leaving.

"It doesn't fill you with great confidence," one said. "So far, they are basing their defence on the company's track record. But if the people responsible for that performance are going, that is a concern."

Argos has increased Mr Stewart's pay from £200,000 to £360,000 from April and is paying him a one-off bonus of £196,000.

One senior fund manager said the payments were surprisingly generous. "The sums they are handing over are quite extraordinary. They are putting

his salary up, increasing his pension and bringing it forward. It could work out at £2m."

However, some investors were more supportive, saying Argos did not have the reputation of being a lavish payer and that its probity should be welcomed. "I think they have been pretty straight about it," one said.

City analysts and investors have expressed concerns about the way details of Mr Stewart's departure were buried in the small print at the back of the defence document. The document itself has been greeted with a lukewarm reaction in the

City which expressed surprise about the lack of detail in the current trading statement and the absence of news on a special dividend. "The defence does not seem sparkling," one said.

Stuart Rose, the new chief executive, is looking at three main areas to improve trading performance. These are improvements to the catalogue to make it more modern, improvements to the stores to make them more welcoming and shifts in the pricing structure to increase the number of higher priced ranges without going too upmarket.

### STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100	Dow Jones	Nikkei
5787.30	8299.77	14189.10
Change: 2.50	Change: 1.34	Change: 0.04
Change(%): 0.04	Change(%): 0.02	Change(%): 0.00
52 wk high: 5793.20	52 wk low: 4189.10	52 wk high: 14189.10
52 wk low: 5132.40	52 wk low: 4384.20	52 wk low: 13842.20
250-day: 5787.30	250-day: 8299.77	250-day: 14189.10
50-day: 5787.30	50-day: 8299.77	50-day: 14189.10
All Share: 2683.40	All Share: 7.76	All Share: 0.29
SmallCap: 2469.20	SmallCap: 11.80	SmallCap: 0.47
Real Estate: 1383.00	Real Estate: 7.10	Real Estate: 0.53
AIM: 1006.50	AIM: 2.70	AIM: 0.27
FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30
FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30
FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30

### INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
7.00	6.10	5.60
Change: 0.00	Change: 0.00	Change: 0.00
Change(%): 0.00	Change(%): 0.00	Change(%): 0.00
52 wk high: 7.00	52 wk low: 6.10	52 wk high: 5.60
52 wk low: 7.00	52 wk low: 6.10	52 wk low: 5.60
250-day: 7.00	250-day: 6.10	250-day: 5.60
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FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30
FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30

### CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
1.6462	1.8285	161.13
Change: +0.17c	Change: +0.05p	Change: +0.01p
Change(%): +0.01	Change(%): +0.00	Change(%): +0.00
52 wk high: 1.6462	52 wk low: 1.8285	52 wk high: 161.13
52 wk low: 1.6462	52 wk low: 1.8285	52 wk low: 161.13
250-day: 1.6462	250-day: 1.8285	250-day: 161.13
50-day: 1.6462	50-day: 1.8285	50-day: 161.13
All Share: 2683.40	All Share: 7.76	All Share: 0.29
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FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30
FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30
FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30	FTSE 100: 5787.30

### TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3570	Italy (lira)	2.870
Austria (schillings)	20.37	Japan (yen)	206.21
Belgium (francs)	59.80	Malta (lira)	0.6303
Canada (\$)	2.2786	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2655
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8465	Norway (kroner)	12.19
Denmark (kroner)	11.12	Portugal (escudos)	206.48
Finland (markka)	8.8677	Spain (pesetas)	166.64
France (francs)	9.7256	South Africa (rand)	245.32
Germany (marks)	2.9190	Sweden (kroner)	7.8052
Greece (drachme)	460.85	Switzerland (francs)	1.29
Hong Kong (\$)	12.36	Turkey (lira)	363.153
Ireland (pounds)	1.677	USA (\$)	1.6077

Source: Thomas Cook  
Rates for indication purposes only



**JEREMY WARNER**  
ON WHY THE CITY IS  
WRONG ABOUT THE  
GLAXO WELLCOME  
MERGER WITH  
SMITHKLINE  
BEECHAM

## What Genghis has to teach us about mergers

SOMEWHERE deep in the Vatican's Papal archive there lies an exchange of correspondence dating back to the mid thirteenth century between the then Pope and Genghis Khan, grandson of the legendary Genghis, the great Mongol conqueror. Loosely translated, it reads something like this:

Pope to Khan: "You are a sinner of the worst possible kind and I am hurt to my very soul by the damage you are causing. However, if you come to Rome and repent, I can offer you the gift of baptism, redemption and ever lasting life."

Khan to Pope: "I do not understand what you are saying. As head of this great dynasty, I am already descended directly from God. In any case, having studied all the world's major religions, I find one very much like another. However, if you come to my court and worship at my feet, I promise not to sack Rome and not to slay you, as I have slayed others."

I cite this story to make a point about personal and cultural incompatibility, of which we have read much this week with the breakdown of the planned merger between Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham.

There was a time when the Holy Roman Empire and the Pope deliberately courted the Mongols as allies against Islam. An alliance of interest was proposed, in effect a merger. It is not hard to imagine how in the corporate parlance of today this might have been sold to sceptical chieftains and cardinals. Just think what we could achieve to-

gether, the Pope might have said. Combine your military might and unrivalled administrative skills with the unifying force and commanding spiritual power of my religion and we'd have a world heater of truly global proportions.

It was never to be. The great Khan believed himself directly descended from God, a proposition the Pope could never accept, even though it was not dissimilar to that of his own Christ's view on earth directly descended through apostolic succession from St Peter the Apostle. When it came to slaughter and pillage, the two probably had more in common than the Church would like to admit. But fundamentally they were different. The Church saved its wrath for Muslims and heretics. The Mongols made no such distinction.

Culturally and personally, then, the two empires - the one spiritual but with a heavy hand on the secular, the other entirely secular - could never ally themselves. Culturally they were too dissimilar, and personally their titular heads occupied positions pretty much identical to each other. "If I'm emperor, what does that make you?", they might have said one to another. In unison, they would have answered their own question thus: "Why, my servant, of course."

I don't want to stretch the analogy too far. For a start it is not clear who, between the Yorkshire grit of Sir Richard Sykes of Glaxo, and the go-getting determination of Jan Leschly of SmithKline, would best be cast as the great Khan. No doubt both would

regard it as insulting to be passed over and assigned the role of Pope. But plainly we can learn something from the parallel. In the City, the collapse of the merger talks is widely blamed on a clash of personality, on the inability of either to accept they should play second fiddle to the other. Outrage! How dare these people let their egos get in the way of all that shareholder value, everyone says.

But actually, in truth, is this not just the way of the world? Is it really possible for big, successful, autocratically run corporate empires to be merged on agreed and equal terms? Or are the cultural differences and the fact that invariably both bosses believe themselves and the corporate model they have created superior to the other, obstacles that are just too big to surmount. In the City no obstacle would be deemed large enough to stand between the investment banker and his fee. Ask him to knock down Everest and he would attempt to do it. But whether these mega mergers are either in the public interest, or the longer term interests of shareholders, is a different thing.

The arguments in favour of big consolidating mergers are well rehearsed. Essentially they are to do with scale, cost cutting, and the enhanced market clout of the larger organisation. In pharmaceuticals there is a separate "gee-whizz" technology justification tacked on. At its most basic, this is simply to do with the enhanced prospect of drug discovery and development that a larger research and development budget brings.

But it also has to do with the rival technologies that different pharmaceutical companies are developing. SmithKline is considered strong in gene identification technology, or genomics, and has invested heavily in it. Glaxo's great hope for the future is its investment in combinatorial chemistry. Both technologies, it is said, offer the prospect of a quantum leap in drug discovery, development and healthcare. Put the two together and the combination would be unbeatable.

The trouble is that nobody knows whether this proposition is true. The best guarantee of consumer choice and interest is nearly always competition and diversity. To believe this is reversed in the case of pharmaceuticals, and that it is hegemony that is capable of producing the best result, is to suspend the accepted laws of economics.

The public interest is one thing. What about the long term interests of investors? These things can be made to work, and to generate value. Both SmithKline Beecham and Glaxo Wellcome are themselves the result of successful mergers. What tends to happen in the successful merger, however, is not a coming together and mixing of two corporate cultures, but a subsuming of one by the other. The financial terms of the deal may justify the description merger, but in practice what is occurring is a takeover. The laws of natural selection reign, and a dominant species emerges.

What seems to have happened with

Glaxo/SmithKline is that Sir Richard took it into his head that Mr Leschly's centralised way of running things with its rigid lines of reporting and responsibility (the SmithKline corporate model in other words) was wholly inappropriate for Glaxo. Since Mr Leschly was to be chief executive of the combined company, this was obviously going to be a problem. You can call that ego, if you like, but plainly it is reflective of more fundamental differences. If the next few years was to be spent in factional infighting and scheming, the merger would have ended up causing more harm than good to shareholder value.

The City still wants this merger to happen. The solution would seem to be, then, to get one company to take over the other - to bring about a situation, as it were, where Genghis Khan is allowed to sack Rome. Since these days investors don't on the whole approve of hostile takeovers, with the bid premium they invariably involve, the battle would have to be fought on neutral terms. The choice would not be the usual one of accepting an offer or rejecting it, but between two opposed management approaches.

That choice could be put either directly to institutions, many of which own shares in both companies, or more practically it could be made by non executive directors. Better still, the two companies could decide to call it quits and go their own separate ways. Some mergers just aren't meant to happen.

## Forest's promotion gamble highlights football's cash divide

By Andrew Yates

NOTTINGHAM Forest yesterday highlighted the growing gulf between the financial fortunes of football clubs in the Premier League and the First Division by suggesting it would have to sell star players and slash costs if its gamble to win promotion this season fails.

The club, which was relegated from the Premiership last season, but is currently second in the First Division behind Middlesbrough, is clocking up huge losses by keeping on expensive players in a make-or-buy effort to get back to the top.

In an example of how the influence of the City has pervaded the modern game, Nottingham Forest will have to cut back dramatically on expenses to make up for lost millions of TV revenues if it stays in the lower division.

"As a public limited company, over the long term our cost base has got to be in line with our revenues. We are very conscious of the fact that we

cannot keep on losing money," said Philip Soar, Nottingham Forest's chief executive yesterday.

The average Premier League club receives £8m from BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, to screen live games. However First Division clubs typically get just £800,000. That gap is due to widen even further, with teams in the top flight likely to receive payments well in excess of £10m over the coming few seasons.

Nottingham Forest made a loss of £6.5m in the six months to November. The players and staff bill of £4.7m meant it made a loss of £2.4m at the operating level. It also spent £4m on transfer fees.

A group of financiers, including Philip Soar, Nigel Wray, the property magnate, and Irving Scholar, the former Tottenham chairman, bought the club, famous as 1979 and 1980 European Cup winners, in March for £16m. Since then they have spent £11m on players, and only raised £3.5m

from transfers, including the sale of Brian Roy, the Dutch international.

The club raised £2.6m by selling new shares at 70p, in a flotation last October. However the shares fell another 1p to 57.5p yesterday. Mr Soar said the poor performance matched the slump in football sector generally which has proved a turn off for investors over the last 12 months.

Meanwhile Wigan Athletic, another club hoping to break into the big time, announced that it had appointed Alfred McAlpine, the construction group, to build a £24.5m new 25,000 all-seater stadium.

David Whelan, chairman of Wigan Athletic, plans to build a dual purpose stadium on the site of an old athletics ground at Robin Park, which will also house Wigan Warriors, the rugby league team. Mr Whelan raised almost £17m last summer from selling shares in JJB Sports, his sports goods retail chain, to fund the new development.

## Coffee Republic plans to treble its outlets after £8.5m placing



Coffee Republic, the chain of coffee bars founded by an ex-investment banker and his sister and backed by the Bahamas-based millionaire Joe Lewis, is raising £8.5m to treble its number of outlets. The AIM-listed company has brought in Nicholas Jeffrey, the former Cantors boss, as chairman. A placing of 40 million shares at 21p will

enable Coffee Republic to increase its chain from 11 to 35 with new outlets in London, Manchester and Newcastle. The company was formed in 1995 by Bobby Hashemi, formerly of Lehman Brothers, and his sister Sahar, a solicitor. The placing will value the business at £8.5m and reduce their combined holding to 16 per cent.

## Deutsche Bank US chief quits as shake-up continues

CARTER MCCLELLAND, head of Deutsche Bank North America and former co-head of global investment banking, is expected to leave the company within weeks. Mr McClelland's decision is believed to be connected with the continuing reorganisation of the bank and the appointment of Bill Harrison, former head of BZW, as vice-chairman of DMG, Deutsche's investment banking arm. The news follows the resignation earlier this week of Maurice Thompson, also former co-head of investment banking. Mr Harrison, who will spearhead the integration of Deutsche's investment and global banking arms, officially starts work on Monday. Deutsche's overhaul of its operations is expected to cost 9,000 jobs world-wide.

## Barclays to cut securities jobs

BARCLAYS is to make 300 staff redundant at its global securities centres at London and Trowbridge in Wiltshire, according to UNIFI, the banking union. The job cuts follow Barclays' decision to exit the global securities business in 1996. The redundancies at London and Trowbridge had previously been expected in September of this year, but Barclays' staff were informed earlier this week that the timetable had been brought forward. Barclays said it expected more than half the redundancies to be voluntary.

## United News sells to Candover

UNITED NEWS & Media, Lord Hollick's media group, yesterday confirmed the long-awaited sale of the last of its regional newspapers to a group led by Candover, the venture capital group, for £360m. United News said it also agreed to sell its UPN Espana unit to Hebdoo Mag International Group for £42.75m. The sale agreements mark a further step in the consolidation of regional newspapers, as media companies rationalise their diverse operations.

## Bluebird urges bid rejection

BLUEBIRD TOYS yesterday urged its shareholders to reject what it termed a half-hearted bid from investment firm Guinness Peat Group. GPG, chaired by New Zealander Ron Briedey, has offered 101p a share, valuing Bluebird at £42m.

## Glaxo may get institutions' support for bid

By Andrew Yates

GLAXO Wellcome may receive the support of a number of large institutional investors if it launches a no-premium hostile bid for SmithKline Beecham, it emerged yesterday.

But some of Glaxo's shareholders are understood to be lukewarm about the prospect of the group offering a large premium for SmithKline, which could destroy some of the potential value created by the deal.

Merger talks between the

two drugs giants, that would be have led to the largest corporate deal in history, broke down on Monday night.

"We would be interested in getting back some of the value that was promised to us but was taken away. But paying a premium could prove risky," said one fund manager.

News that Glaxo was contemplating a hostile bid for the group sent shares in SmithKline up 51p to 779p yesterday in early trading before they slipped back to 760p. Glaxo's shares fell 57p to 1700p on fears that it

might be tempted to pay a large premium for its rival.

Analysts pointed out that Glaxo would have to overcome several obstacles to launch a no-premium hostile bid for SmithKline. Under accounting rules Glaxo may be forced to right off up to £400m of goodwill, which would depress future earnings, although some experts believe this problem is not insurmountable.

SmithKline are also likely to put up strong resistance to any such move. "They will not give up without one hell of a fight.

It could get very bloody and costly," said one industry analyst. Observers believe SmithKline could even resort to seeking another pharmaceutical partner to fend off a hostile bid.

Glaxo plans to meet institutional investors over the next few weeks, when it would have a chance to sound them out about takeover proposals. If it did launch a hostile bid it would probably look to sell SmithKline's consumer healthcare business to concentrate on developing a powerful drugs pipeline.

## COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Alliance & Leicester (F) - (+)	395.0m (246.0m)	44.9p (32.0p)	20.8p (16.3p)	
Allied Leisure (F)	22.1m (18.9m)	1.485m (1.363m)	1.18p (1.07p)	0.35p (0.33p)
Autonov (F)	0.489m (0.223m)	-1.8m (-1.8m)	-2.10p (-2.46p)	nil
Shredded Toys (F)	58.58m (57.65m)	5.23m (6.88m)	10.5p (14.7p)	9.0p (9.0p)
Fieldcrest (F)	1.86m (2.38m)	-38.76m (-40.91m)	-0.62p (-0.85p)	nil
Frederick Cooper (F)	27.7m (28.2m)	0.740m (0.778m)	-1.3p (-2.2p)	nil
Go-Ahead Group (F)	207.8m (190.0m)	20.37m (7.38m)	27.1p (14.1p)	3.0p (2.15p)
London Finance & Inv (F) - (+)	29.8m	0.375m (1.084m)	0.97p (2.75p)	0.5p (0.8p)
Premier Loan (F)	12.3m (11.1m)	-24.88m (-5.20m)	-32.0p (-10.7 p)	nil
White City of Lond (F) - (+)		6.33m (0.181m)	2.17p (-0.70p)	- (+)

(F) - Final (I) - interim EPS is pre-exceptional \* Dividend to be paid as a FD

## WHO'S SUING WHO

**JOHN WILLCOCK**



A WIFE who was sent to jail three years ago after remortgaging the marital home with eight different lending institutions is the subject of a writ this week from First National Bank, one of the lenders.

Winifred Mary Watmough is one of 10 defendants in the writ from First National, together with her husband

Walter Samuel Watmough and Alliance & Leicester, the first institution to lend to the couple.

Mrs Watmough managed to raise loans secured on her home from nine different lending institutions in a borrowing spree which lasted from 1988 to 1995.

First National is seeking to unwind the tangle of legal claims and counter claims left over from the case, which centres on the Watmoughs' home, "Westwinds", Laleham Reach, Chertsey, Surrey. The house itself is only currently worth about £200,000, a figure likely to be exceeded by the lawyers' fees incurred in the saga.

In total First National is suing the Watmoughs, Alliance & Leicester, Lloyds Bank, Alliance & Leicester Personal Finance, Mercantile Credit Company, Abbey National Personal Finance, National Westminster Bank, TSB Direct and Barclays Bank.

The story starts in 1969 when the couple bought their house using a mortgage from Alliance & Leicester totalling £3,089. In 1982 the Watmoughs borrowed another £25,182.45 from Forward Trust Charge, again secured on the house.

By 1988 the value of the house had grown to £220,000, and in July of that

year First National lent Mr and Mrs Watmough £56,000, secured on the house.

This sum was used to pay off another mortgage and to improve the house. In January 1990 First National advanced another £5,662.37 to the couple.

On 4 April 1990 Alliance & Leicester wrote to First National saying that it was making a further advance to Mr and Mrs Watmough.

First National's writ claims: "The said representation was untrue."

It continues: "Mr Watmough denies that he was a party to the said transactions."

"In May 1995 Mrs Watmough was convicted of obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception and four counts of making a false instrument and sentenced to a term of imprisonment."

"The said false instruments included the Plaintiff's Charge and the further advance transactions with Alliance & Leicester."

"It is to be inferred that in fact, Mrs Watmough had deceived the Plaintiff and Alliance & Leicester by forging Mr Watmough's signature on the said Charge and further advance transactions."

Believing that both Mr and Mrs Watmough were borrowing the money

from Alliance & Leicester, First National agreed to sign a "Deed of Postponement" acknowledging the society's further charge over the house. In fact the money only went to Mrs Watmough, the writ says, rendering the postponement deed null and void.

First National now claims that it is owed a total of £204,949.90 including interest.

The writ adds: "The fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth defendants are joined as persons claiming to be interested in the Property..."

It transpires that Mrs Watmough managed to raise further money secured on "Westwinds" from Lloyds Bank on 4 February 1993, from Alliance & Leicester Personal Credit on 14 April 1993, from Mercantile Credit Company on 17 June 1993, from Abbey National Personal Finance on 12 July 1993, from NatWest Bank on 1 November 1993, from TSB Direct on 19 July 1994, and lastly from Barclays Bank on 21 March 1995.

Davis & Co, the solicitors representing First National Bank, are demanding a declaration that the deed of postponement given to Alliance & Leicester is null and void.

It also wants the first three charges granted over "Westwinds" to be given

priority as the whole financial mess is sorted out.

THE Inebriated Newt is suing The Baby Grand Hotel Company over the lease for the Newt's restaurant at 172 Northcote Road, a fashionable area of London near Clapham Junction.

The Newt is demanding "Relief, if necessary, against forfeiture of the Lease dated 1 February 1985 in the respect of the premises..."

It is also seeking a declaration that "the defendant was not entitled to seek to re-enter the aforesaid premises, as it did on or about the 4 December 1997".

LASTLY, David Gower is suing a Devon-based maker of surfing gear over an alleged trademark infringement.

My enquiries about the writ prompted laughter from a member of solicitors Bond Pearce of Plymouth, acting for Mr Gower; no, this isn't the famous cricketer, he said. The plaintiff is in fact a maker of surfing related clothing, under the trademark "Headworn".

The surfing Mr Gower is based at Manor House, Brunel Road, Newton Abbot. The solicitor tells me: "I've never known him to be confused with the cricketer before. I've met him, and I can assure you he has no white hair."

THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

CVCP The Voice of UK Universities

Higher Education Conferences

### Lifelong Learning

The Role for Universities

Thursday 5 March 1998 • Central London

The Government is due to publish a series of White Papers on Lifelong Learning in early 1998, from the DfEE, Scottish and Welsh Offices. This one day CVCP conference will explore the role for universities in developing and implementing the Government's proposals. Universities already play a significant role in lifelong learning, providing courses at all levels - HND, undergraduates, PhD and CPD. How will the developments announced in the White Papers affect this role? In particular what changes will be needed in universities' management, access, curriculum and funding? How can higher education generally develop its interface and partnership with further education to deliver the flexible learning opportunities that lifelong learning demands?

The conference is for senior managers in higher and further education, academics, careers advisers and training and personnel officers in business and funding organisations.

Speakers include:

- Baroness Blackstone, Minister for Education and Employment
- Diana Warwick, Chief Executive, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
- Professor Bob Fryer, Principal, Northern College (Lifelong Learning Advisory Group)
- Dr Geraldine Kenney-Wallace, MD and VC, British Aerospace Virtual University

Delegate Fees:

- Full Rate: Commercial, Central Government: £40+VAT (£42.00) Total £82.00
- Reduced Rate: Universities, Local Authorities: £15+VAT (£15.75) Total £31.75
- Supported Rate: Voluntary Organisations, Charities: £10+VAT (£10.75) Total £21.75

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# Building material groups in the merger spotlight

## MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

The stock market's perennial fascination with takeover action kept shares in record breaking form.

With Footsie displaying even more volatility than usual, it was among the second-liners that much of the rumoured action was concentrated.

Two building material groups hogged the limelight, prompting suggestions they intend to merge. Marley up 14.5p to 110.5p, a two day gain of 17.5p, said it never commented on market rumours. Hepworth, up 25.5p to 235p, was unable to produce any reaction.

The two groups are below their year's high. Marley touched 134.5p in June and a few months earlier Hepworth hit 284.5p. The companies would make a good fit with a combined capitalisation of more than £800m.

The building materials sector was also helped by positive comments from SBC Warburg.

Colt Telecom was another midcap share in form. It jumped 90p (after 11.5p) to 1.325p with the inevitable bid story circulating. The shares came to market late in 1997 at 275p.

The company is not expected to make a profit until 2002. Last year turnover more than doubled to £81.5m and losses rose from £11.2m to £32.6m. It has built or is building six local telephone exchanges in European cities, including London and Berlin, and plans to start operations in a further six European centres. The company specialises in business-to-business operations, the high value end of the market.

An overseas bid is widely expected, probably from the US. Footsie ended an erratic session, with a modest 2.5 points gain which nevertheless took it to yet another peak, 5,767.3.

It swung between a gain of

57, which took it to a trading peak of 5,821.8, and a fall of 23.

But midcaps were again rampant. The FTSE 250 index closed 68.7 up at a 5,201 high. The smallcap index gained 11.6 to 2,469.2.

SmithKline Beecham lost much of an early surge. Hopes that Glaxo Wellcome will mount a hostile bid for its short lived drugs partner lifted the shares 51p in early trading. At the close the price was down to 12p with the price at 760p. Glaxo ended 57p lower at 1,700p.

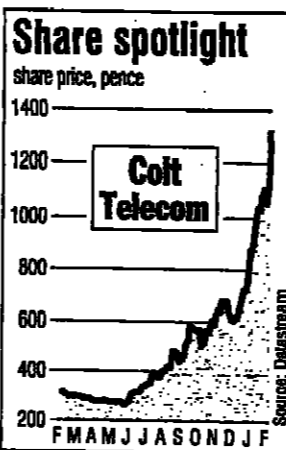
Shield Diagnostic gained 30p to 650p on rumours of a Nasdaq listing.

Shield Diagnostic was the best performing blue chip, rising 17p to 232.5p ahead of next week's results. Positive comments from ABN Amro and Morgan Stanley helped. Hays, the business services group also with figures next week, improved 38p to 940p.

Bass was slower 22p to

1.018p as NatWest Securities hoisted a sale sign. On the £1.8bn acquisition of Intercontinental Hotels & Resorts it says: "Bass has got itself back into playing the hotel asset cycle again. This may prove to be rightly timed but it is clear that the price paid does not allow for any disappointment".

Credit Lyonnais Laing



caution contributed to a 5.5p fall to 516.5p by Tesco and Charles Stanley advice to sell Rank left the shares down 11p to 333p.

BTR, with results next week, was heavily traded although the price ended little changed at 161p. There was even unlikely talk of a bid with Caterpillar, the US giant, the name in the frame. BTR is halfway through a reshaping exercise which involves £5bn of disposals. Year's profits next week are likely to emerge at £1.1bn against £1.3bn.

Trust Motor, a garage chain, produced the day's best gain, a top gear 40 per cent performance to 196p. It may collect a take over bid from its management. Another possible bidder however, the company was demerged from the old Barr and Wallace Arnold coach holidays group when it was sold to its management last summer. Trust shares hit a

132p low at the start of this month.

Go-Ahead, the bus and train group, improved 19p to 584p following interim figures.

Verity was unchanged at 69.75p. The group had to contend with Merrill Lynch caution. The investment house has removed the shares from its buy list although it is positive long term. It frets about a cash call to continue the development of the NXT wafer-thin sound system. The lead speaker technology has attracted 20 licensing agreements but staff costs are increasing.

Emerald Energy fell 1.25p to 7.75p, reflecting Lasmo's intention to sell its Colombian operations and the lack of information about the progress of Emerald's drilling in the South American state.

Newcomer Quad Health-care, a pharmaceutical group, made a subdued start, closing at 130.5p against a 130p launch price by Nomura, the investment house.

## TAKING STOCK

Wiggins, the property developer, held at 12.75p. Stockbroker Peel Hunt is keen on the shares. Analyst Chris Radmore sees profits climbing from £4.9m to £8m and then hitting £11m. Besides a range of property developments Wiggins has the civilian rights to Manston Airport in Kent and is bidding for the entire 700 acre Manston site which is being sold by the Ministry of Defence. The shares have climbed from 8.75p last year.

Ronson, the luxury goods group, had another firm session, gaining 2.5p to 12p. The shares have doubled since stories started to circulate that Victor Kiam, the man famed for lidding Remington shavers so much he bought the company, will move in as chairman. Ronson is in the process of a cash raising exercise with its US shareholder expected to play an important role. The shares were 23.5p last year and 65.5p four years ago.

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	PERC
180	400	200	Alcoholics Anonymous	25.50	+2.00	4.2	63.00
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# North's Angel looks at home

**Paul Vallely's  
BRITAIN**



## Gateshead:

After initial hesitation about its merits, this North-eastern town has taken to the gigantic figure that will be seen by some 33 million people a year.

THE nobs and southerners have all gone. Lord Gormley, Anthony Gormley, Janet Street-Porter and the rest. And the people of Gateshead have been left alone with their Angel. They were not, thankfully, subjected to the presence of the plummy art critic Brian Sewell, who opined from the safety of the capital that Gormley's statue was vulgar, should be pulled down and the little North-eastern town bombed to the ground.

Gateshead responded with more sophistication. "We hope he is very happy living in London," the leader of the town council, George Gill, responded drily.

Not that controversy has been restricted to a north-south axis. The Angel of the North is destined to become Britain's most-viewed public work of art. Sited next to the A1 and the railway between London and Edinburgh, it will be passed by 33 million people a year.

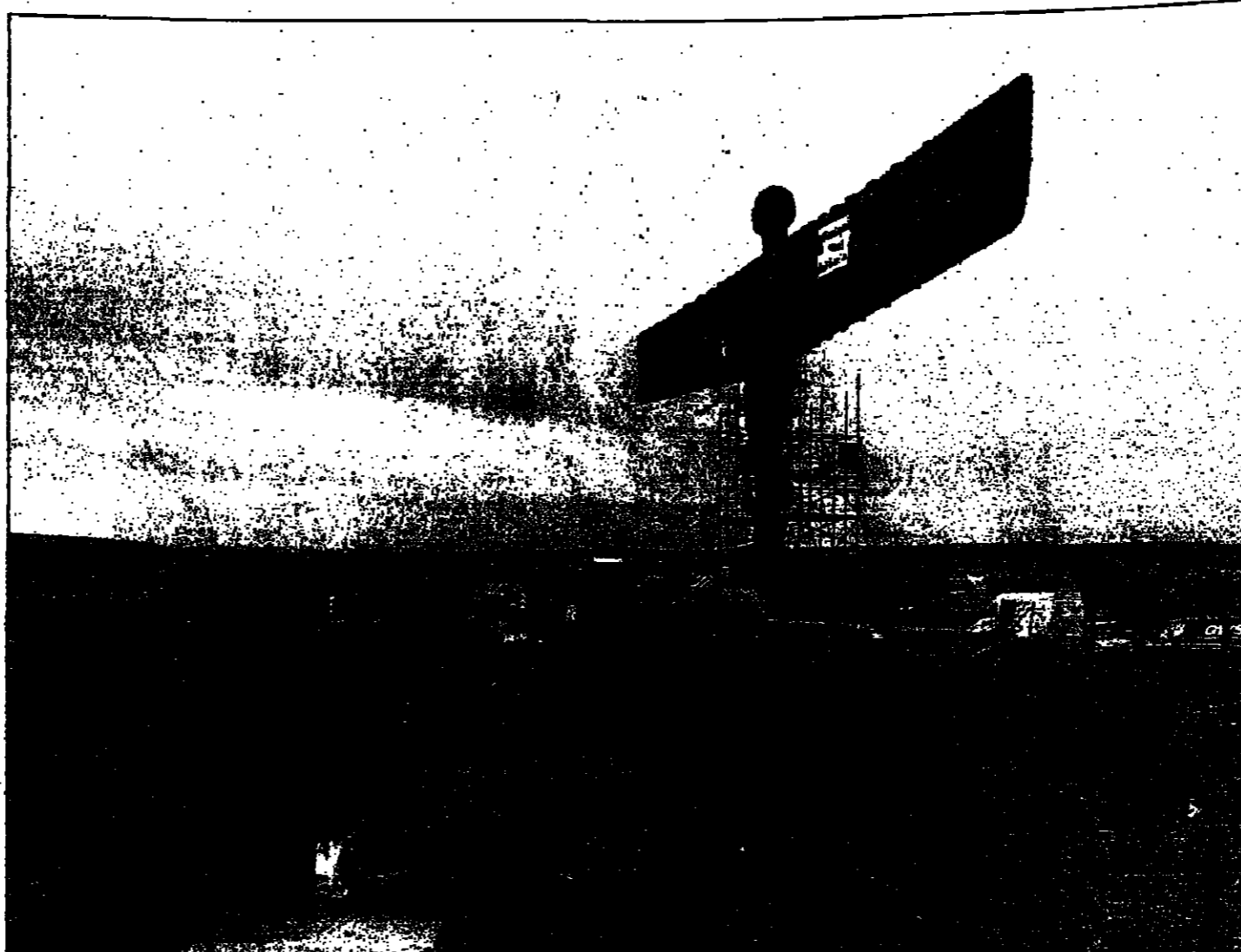
But its erection has not been without controversy locally. There were petitions against its "Nazi gigantism", fears that its 175ft wingspan might interfere with television reception and complaints that the £200,000 it cost would have been better spent in schools or hospitals. The androgynous anonymity of its figure in the preliminary drawings earned it condemnation as "a monument devoid of meaning - the perfect symbol for our vacuous times".

"The row is all part of the art," said Sean O'Brien, as he peered through owl-shaped specs at the towering sinuous statue with its huge rust-coloured wings. "You see the Angel through what you have heard or read." O'Brien is nothing to do with the sculpture.

He is a local poet of substance (his last volume, *Ghost Train*, won the Forward Prize) and he is currently engaged on an intriguing CD-Rom project with a dozen other writers, artists and computer programmers to produce *The Book of the North*, to re-imagine the region in a new mythological geography. I had invited him along as a cultural mediator.

We were stood on the windy knoll at the side of the A1 which was once the site of the pit baths of Team Colliery. Building rubble and big chunks of coal were visible amid the soil cleared around the massive plinth on which the metal giant had somehow landed. It was an odd juxtaposition of the human and the mechanical. Its face had the blankness of a computer-generated mummy, its torso was ribbed and subtle, and its flat square-cut wings spoke of something man-made, for there are no right-angles in sentient nature. Yet the Angel is alive. "See its legs, tensed, like a diver on a board," said O'Brien, "or a gymnast waiting to seize the rings".

Though the luminaries had all departed, the birth-pangs continued.



Taking wing: The faithful on their way to view Anthony Gormley's £200,000 pièce de résistance

Photograph: David Rose

Scaffolding now stood between body and limbs. And the noise - the rumble of the crane, hum of a generator, and screeching of grinders - sounded like the great creature's breathing. Periodically a welder's magnesium-white light flashed by the heart of the body and sparks tumbled in rolls down the ribbed trunk, prompting the half-thought that the electricity might spark the figure into action to stalk the bleak, wide-skied landscape like a latter-day Frankenstein's monster.

For there is ambiguity about the Angel. Some have seen a menace in it, which is perhaps why reservations were still being expressed among men in the nearby pubs or women

walking their dogs. A small number resent that the sculpture has been imposed upon them by councillors who live in other parts of the town. And yet you could say the same of an intrusive motorway or banal supermarket. As Sean O'Brien put it: "It's as if the resentment comes out of the idea that art is decorative and superfluous, rather than something integral to life."

It is the same utilitarian calculus which insists that the money (which came from the National Lottery's art budget) should have gone on health or education. But art dignifies a place," he said, "and conveys a sense of the value of the people who live there."

Aptly enough, evidence of that came from a welder rather than a poet. Steve Robinson, clad in harness over his orange overalls, descended from the scaffold where he had been inserting the final plates between the body and the wings. "No one's ever attempted anything like this before," the welder from Hartlepool Steel Fabrications said. "For us it is something different to have a finished job we can look at and be proud of. I've been on this for seven months now. It will be odd to be back to humdrum pipework for the gas and oil industry next week. It will be a bit of an anti-climax after this."

Art counts for nothing if it does not move, but it is not simply its aesthetic which elevates the spirit. It is a vehicle for pride too. The economy is booming in Gateshead. Unemployment has halved in recent times, confidence among manufacturers is higher than in any other UK region and local companies last year increased their turnover at three times the national average.

Yet Gateshead is probably one of the least fashionable places in England. There is a sense here as people contemplate the Angel that "we needed something like this - it shows what we can do".

With surprising speed the local people are, then, taking possession of the Angel of the North. "A lot of

people who didn't like it at first say it's growing on them," said Joan Grey, landlady of the nearby pub which was until recently The Old Barn Inn but is now renamed The Angel View. "Some people are coming every day to look at it." There is even a sense of ownership about the dissent. "The Angel Ate My Hamster," says the graffiti on the plinth. Visitors come to its feet in a steady stream - boys on their way to football, a snake of schoolchildren with their teacher, three OAPs who had taken the bus from Sunderland and then walked shakily with their sticks to the base.

"It's a magnificent piece of engineering," said Alan Hall, a retired shuttering joiner who had been born and bred in Gateshead and who had come from Seaham to see the edifice. "Just the plinth alone is a great piece of work. The foundation piles go 60ft into the earth and they say the bolts which fasten it down are 7ft apiece."

And an angel is just right. There was one suggestion that Gormley should have been asked to sculpt a miner in commemoration of the industry which dominated the local economy for 600 years, until Thatcherism. But that would have been to look to the past, and there is already too much "heritage" stuff around in the North. An angel is a being which mediates between Heaven and Earth and this one, with its feet in an extinct mine and its wings in a sky silver with hope, joins the area's past with its future. Made from the materials of the wreckage of the old industry - the steel has copper added to make it look rusty - it aspires to something transcendent. This angel is secular yet cruciform. It is made of manifestly heavy substance and yet it can fly. It is the stuff of incarnation, for the material of this earth is all that we have from which to construct our dreams.

Wild tree-whipping winds blew up yesterday morning. The weathermen spoke of Force 12 and the bridges over the Tyne were closed to high-sided vehicles. But the Angel looked unperturbed in its new home. It stood, swaying like a giant oak, its massy wings outstretched in welcome to those who ventured North with an open mind.

Making an angel, ISM

THE INDEPENDENT  
INDEPENDENT

## £10 Conran lunch

The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout February for £10

Until Saturday February 28th, the following establishments are offering readers a two course lunch or early evening supper for just £10 per person.

### How to Book

To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting yourself as an Independent diner. On your arrival at the restaurant you should present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

A special discount is available on selected items in the Bluebird and Le Pont de la Tour shops on presentation of the token.



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0171 559 1000  
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Blue Print Café The Design Museum, 28 Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE  
0171 378 7031  
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm\*

Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill 36d Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE  
0171 403 8403  
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Mezzo 100 Wardour Street, London, W1V 3LE  
0171 314 4000  
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm  
closed Saturday lunchtime, open Sunday 12pm - 4pm

Quaglino's 16 Bury Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6AL  
0171 930 6767  
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 5.30pm - 6.30pm

Zinc Bar & Grill 21 Heddon Street, London, W1R 7LF  
0171 255 8899  
The special 3 course menu is available between 12noon and 7pm between Monday and Wednesday the offer is extended until 11pm\*

The offer is available 7 days a week at all six restaurants  
\* Closed from 6pm on Sunday Offer not available after 6pm on February 14

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Valid on Saturday February 28th

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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This voucher entitles the holder and all members of their booking to participate in The Independent/Conran Restaurants £10 lunch offer

TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

## INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



## WELCOME TO FATTY TOWERS

Buster Bloodvessel was one of the biggest pop stars of the Eighties ... literally. But now his life is very different. Cole Moreton talks to him

PLUS:

Turn again - why London needs a female mayor  
Paparazzi wars - how Hollywood is fighting back  
Crossover culture - we're all Asian now

هنا من الأصل



# TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 28 February 1998



And the winners are... Shirley Bell's compelling picture of buffalo racing on the island of Sumbawa in Indonesia was voted top of the Action category in the Independent/Wanderlust photographic competition. This - and the spectacular work of other finalists - is on show this weekend at the Destinations '98 travel exhibition at Olympia, London W14. Further results of the competition are featured on page 5

## Sun daze in Kerala

It's a neat reciprocation: tourism is thriving in Kerala, meanwhile the visitors themselves are tourist sights, as Sue Wheat found out

The young Indian on the train looked at me aghast. Then he smiled, as if he'd realised I was joking. I had just explained that white tourists sunbathe because being brown is considered more attractive. He, an English Literature degree student who had been waxing lyrical about Dickens, could not imagine anything more ludicrous. "Tourists sunbathe because their white skin is more sensitive than ours, and feeling the sun on their bodies is amazing for them," was his explanation.

This was my fifth day in Kerala and I was already accustomed to cultural misinterpretations. It had started in Kovalam, the first stop for most charter tourists to this green, well-kept state. Kovalam is a beach resort 16km outside Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram (known more simply by its old name, Trivandrum) and was apparently palm-fringed and beautiful.

After eight years of being a charter flight destination, it now has a selection of restaurants and a host of souvenir shops lining the main beach. Some say it is spoilt, and the shopkeepers complain that the tourists have moved on to Varkala, a new and less developed beach further north. But it is still a beautiful place, with the bustling of Indian life. Every morning a line of 20 or so fishermen and boys sing a Kovalam shanty to help them work in time as they pull in their catch. It is still the stuff that picture postcards are made of.

We were here for a much-needed break in the middle of winter. Lying on the beach, reading and sleeping were our priorities. Apart from being famous for its Communist politics, high literacy rates, good health care and the high status of women, Kerala is also famed for Ayurvedic massage (using healing herbal oils) and yoga. We were going to have a self-indulgent, chilled-out time. But the beach was in fact a strangely stressful place, fraught with moral dilemmas.

The first was whether to sunbathe at all. Sunbathing is obviously not part of Indian culture, but this was a beach resort where it had become accepted for white tourists to do so. "Go

ahead," said the Indian shopkeeper we consulted on the matter. "We understand that you need to do it for your health." In a strange way, that is, of course, true, although it is not the way I had ever interpreted my desire for a suntan. "Don't worry," said some Indian girls on a day trip to the beach. "We don't do it because we are too shy to remove our clothes, but if you want to, it's accepted."

So we did. Yet we couldn't help but

cringe as fleshy women in too-small bikinis strolled up to the fishermen and leant over in earnest interest to look at the day's catch. Even in swimsuit and sarong I felt self-conscious.

Part and parcel of indulging our need for vitamin D was being photographed by Indians who visit Kovalam on Western tourist-watching tours. Many come on their way to Kanyakumari (also known as Cape Comorin), a pilgrimage site at the southernmost

tip of India. Kovalam is a welcome entertainment on the way. Just as we might visit a traditional village and take photos of locals going about their daily business, so the Indians travel to photograph us - a strange people who lie in their underwear in the blazing sun going a shade of red. It is, of course, perfectly understandable and reasonable for them to come and stare; but for us it was strange. Such is the price of a suntan.

We left Kovalam for a while and travelled around the state, making our way to Kuzhikudi where we intended to relax on a traditional wooden houseboat along the famous backwaters - Kerala's labyrinth of waterways through tropical greenery and past traditional fishing and coir-producing villages. We ended up being ushered into a speedboat by a proud old man, eager to show us that he had moved into the Nineties.

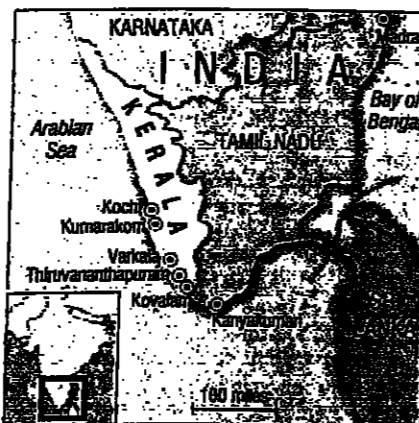
The speedboat took us to Cochin, (now known as Kochi), the commercial capital of the state, where Kerala's tea and spices are auctioned. Dotted along the beach at Fort Cochin are Chinese-style fishing nets. A traditional, photogenic scene if ever there was one (confirmed by the fact that sellers are poised to sell you reels of Kodak at the beach-side), these huge great nets hang in the air and are dipped into the sea on a cantilever mechanism of rocks and ropes.

Unable to choose from the vast array of "fresh fish" at the stalls on the beach, we asked advice from a knowledgeable British expatriate who was working in the fishing industry. We were lucky, apparently, to be here now and not in a few years' time. "The big foreign companies are fishing the place to death - there'll be nothing left in five years," he confided. He added that his conscience was forcing him to leave his job.

Back in Kovalam a week or so later, we arrived the day after an unusual event. The restaurateurs, shopkeepers and tourists had joined forces in a protest march on the town hall.

What could be so important that tourists would get involved in a political protest on holiday? "They were helping us protest for the right to sell beer," said our waiter. A restaurant owner had been imprisoned that week for selling beer to tourists, and our waiter was insistent about the need for change to the complex licensing laws in Kerala. "It is very important for us to be able to sell beer in Kovalam," he explained. "We know the tourists need to drink it - they need it for their health."

### INDIAN SPRING



Citizens' Charters: a passage by air to India is easier and, in real terms, cheaper, than ever. Sue Wheat paid £259 for a return flight from Gatwick to Trivandrum on Monarch through Manos (0171-216 8000).

On schedule: the main airlines flying direct from the UK to Delhi and Mumbai (formerly Bombay) are Air Canada, Air India, British Airways and United Airlines. Many other airlines will get you to Delhi indirectly, stopping anywhere from Ashkhabad to Zurich. The lowest fares are always available from discount travel agents rather than direct from airlines. One useful agent for non-stop flights is

Welcome Travel (0171-439 3627), a leading discount for Air India; other firms offer good deals on a range of carriers. Sample fares from Gatwick to Trivandrum on Monarch in March are: Trivandrum £391 on Qatar Airways, Delhi £390 on Gulf Air via the Middle East, and Mumbai £330 on Alitalia.

Battling bureaucracy: British passport holders need a visa to visit India, usually the six-month, £9 tourist variety. Contact the High Commission of India, India House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA or the Consulate-General of India, The Spencers, 19 Augustus Street, Jewellery Quarter, Hoddey.

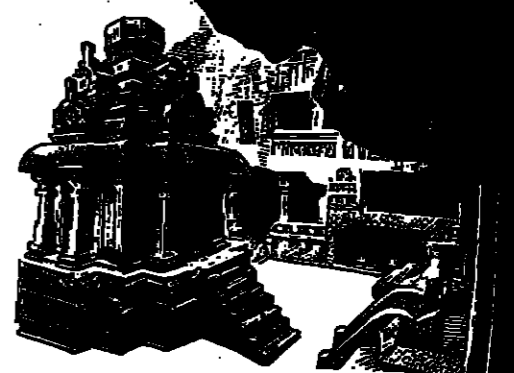
Birmingham B8 6DS. Call 0891 444544 (a premium-rate number) for details.

Health: the only compulsory vaccination is for yellow fever, for people arriving from areas where it is endemic. But protection is advised against typhoid, polio, tetanus, hepatitis A and malaria. If you plan to stay more than three weeks, immunisation against rabies and hepatitis B could be advisable. Call the Masta advice line, 0891 224000 (premium rate) for details.

Information: Indian Government Tourist Office, 7 Cork Street, London W1X 2LN (0171-437 3677).

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### The magical caves of Ellora and Ajanta reach deep into the soul

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For a free brochure call 01233 21999 or post this coupon to: India Tourist office, 7 Cork Street, London W1X 2LN.

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## GREEN CHANNEL

This week the tourism industry has been obsessed with "E"s. The first "E" was Environmental. Wednesday night saw bigwigs in the industry flocking to the Banqueting House in London to see the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards for projects "which have made a positive contribution towards their local environment or heritage". Winners included a nature reserve in Hawaii, a hotel in India, the St Lucia Marine Park and the waterfront rejuvenation in Birmingham (see story, page 9).

The second "E" was Ecological. On Thursday afternoon, environmentalists and tourism industry executives debated whether there should be no-go areas for tourism. The event, held at the Royal Geographical Society and chaired by David Bellamy, highlighted interesting issues - such as whether there should be areas that no one is allowed to visit, since they are just too ecologically sensitive. Or would that simply deny local people the right to earn a living?

And anyone who thinks they understand anything about E knows that it gives you the energy to rave on all night. So on Thursday evening the green revellers moved on to Radio 4 to record a debate linked with the travel exhibition. Destinations '98, at Olympia this weekend. Led by Julian Pettifer, the panelists took on another "E" - Ethics. Can we travel to Burma with a sound conscience if the military are forcing people to build the tourism infrastructure without pay? Is the new-found environmental awareness just green tourism marketing hype, or practical reality? What will happen when people from countries such as India and China start travelling? Do we have the monopoly on travel, just because we did it first?

The granddaddy of environmentalism, David Bellamy, insists that the tourism industry is getting greener - slowly. "Think how quickly package tourism ruined the Costa del Sol. Tourism is now the world's largest industry - it has ousted the petroleum industry from first place... but they are beginning to put their house in order. The problem is that the high-rise hooligans and cheap package boys are always three steps ahead, and ready to ruin another destination. Our challenge is to keep up."

Radio 4's debate on ethical tourism will be broadcast on 7 March at 11.30am

Sue Wheat

## RED CHANNEL

How to cope with the Trans-Siberian Express - tips from The Russia Experience (0181-566 8846).

Is the Trans-Sib like the Orient Express? No, that's a luxury train for tourists - the Trans-Sib isn't. It's a year-round, working service on Russian or Chinese railways, and makes no concessions to tourists at all.

Do females get hassled in Russia? Levels of sexual aggression towards women are low. Sleeper trains are unisex; the tradition is that men "go for a walk" while the women prepare for bed, then the women look the other way while the chaps bed down.



Feisty diva: Cecilia Bartoli

## Euro bash: Cecilia Bartoli in 'Nina' at the Zurich Opera House

Zurich opera house sets an example that its London counterparts would do well to study. Despite a small budget it has remained in the black and its reputation for rare operas has attracted top league names.

The latest is Cecilia Bartoli, the feisty Italian diva who rarely accepts more than one annual operatic role in Europe. Given that her voice, which, according to one critic, sounds as if she has swallowed a Stradivarius, is unsuited to 19th-century *verismo*, Bartoli has begun a mission to unearth forgotten 18th-century works. Her latest discovery is *Nina* by the Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello, which

opens in Zurich on March 14. It promises to be a happy find. Paisiello ranked as Italy's finest late-18th-century composer and helped pioneer the transition of opera buffa from light entertainment to serious drama. He was the court composer for, among others, Empress Catherine of Russia and Napoleon and the most successful of his 83 operas was *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in 1782.

It was this that inspired Mozart to write *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and the young Rossini was so impressed he asked to set to the same libretto. The production of *Nina*, directed by Cesare Lievi and conducted by Adam Fischer, is one of

only a handful this century and if Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro di Venezia* staged in Dresden two years ago is anything to go by, should be well worth the wait.

Performances: March 14, 17, 20, 22; April 8, 11, 13, 16; July 19. Telephone 00 41 1 268 64 00.

There are 10 daily scheduled flights to Zurich from Heathrow with Swissair, British Midland and British Airways. A special offer throughout March costs £99 return if flying out and back on a weekday. Weekend prices start at £145 plus £25 airport tax. Details and bookings from Switzerland Travel Centre 0171 734 4571/4578.

Railway rambles: Matthew Brace heads north to Berwick while Brendan Fox celebrates 125 years of Thomas Cook Timetables

## White sand and holy places



In train: Thomas Cook celebrates 125 years of travel, below

Northumbria is a blissfully deserted county, both in its hilly interior reaching up to the Cheviot Hills, and along its clean, sandy coast. It is empty, despite being well served by the railways. The East Coast Main Line runs through here between Newcastle and Edinburgh. Great North Eastern Railways

run trains stopping at either Alnmouth or Berwick, and some that call at both. Alnmouth is one of the most pleasing villages in the British Isles. Its red-roofed houses sit contentedly on a spit of land at the mouth of, predictably enough, the river Aln, where it empties into the North Sea. A short terrace of

brightly coloured cottages faces south into the protected harbour, and in front of it small fishing boats lie beached at low tide.

It is a view at which I have heard several train passengers oooh and aah, and swear that that is where they are going on their next holiday.

The ride from Alnmouth to Berwick, England's most northerly town, takes just over 20 minutes. The weather can be wild, yet the landscape is surprisingly gentle. It is not nearly as bleak and harsh as visitors might expect. Leaving Alnmouth station (which is just outside the village) the train crosses rolling green hills, scattering sheep as it passes. There is a lot of evidence of ancient ridge and furrow farming in the fields - agricultural evidence of this county's ancient history.

Every now and then low hills block the view, but they soon fall away and passengers get a breathtaking glimpse of the shore. The waves are minty green in the sunlight, and the sweeps of sand look tropical white. As you follow the dunes with your eye from a speeding train, they run low down before sweeping up to 30ft or 40ft, and then

back down to sea level again. Not long after Alnmouth you will pass the RAF station at Boulmer. A rescue helicopter is based here, which you may see on manoeuvres, and near the shore is a spooky-looking military installation wired off with tall mesh fences. If you ever walk past it, you can watch the security cameras turning their heads to follow you down the road.

Farther up the coast, but sadly not visible from the train, is the fishing village of Craster, famous for its factory churning out oak-smoked kippers which are sent all over the world to loyal expatriate customers. You may catch a glimpse of Dunstanburgh Castle, standing silhouetted against the North Sea sky. To the north, beyond the castle, are the majestic sweeps of Embleton and Beadnell Bays, along which shepherds herd their flocks of sheep.

Now look out to sea and there, less than a mile offshore, are the Farne Islands, a bird-spotter's paradise. The islands are internationally famous as a bird reserve and in summer small fishing boats take two-hour tours out to the cliffs to marvel at the aerobatics of the terns and comorants. After the Farnes, the castle on the holy island of Lindisfarne appears, looking at first like a rock sticking up out of the waves. The island was one of the earliest Christian settlements, founded by St Cuthbert in the seventh century. The name comes from the combination of the word Lindis (the name of a nearby stream) and *fahnen* (a Celtic word meaning a place of retreat). As the train gets closer to the shore the rest of the island appears, cut off from the mainland by the tide about five times a day.

The train approaches Berwick, high up above the terracotta rooftops, and crosses the Royal Border

Bridge over the Tweed before drawing in to the station. This was built on the original site of the Great Hall of Berwick Castle where, in 1292, Edward I declared in favour of Balliol as King of Scotland.

Border disputes have plagued Berwick over the years and the town has changed hands between England and Scotland 13 times during its history. A modern dispute is going on right now, not about territory but about a public shelter. The borough council announced a controversial plan to demolish the shelter, made famous by the artist LS Lowry who painted it in 1939, showing it surrounded by his trademark matchstick people and cats and dogs. For the moment it still stands.

While in Berwick, don't forget to pick up a can of Berwick cockles, which are red-and-white-striped sweets. But beware - they can become addictive.

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# TRAVEL

## THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE DESTINATION

France, region by region

plus:

A city break in Rouen and Chateaux in the Loire valley

## For a train experience you won't forget, try Albania

Not many British publications can claim a history of 125 years, least of all a monthly timetable. The March 1998 edition of the Thomas Cook European Timetable, published this week, is celebrating the achievement with a special anniversary edition. This collector's issue breaks new ground, with a colour section narrating the history of the timetable. It also takes a glimpse at future rail developments.

The Odessa-Chernivtsi or Morges-Biere timetables may not be everyone's preferred bedtime reading, but delving into the minutiae of European rail schedules reveals the fascinating diversity of services on offer.

**Fastest trains** The standard continues to be set by the 300km/h Trains à Grande Vitesse (TGV) in France, but Europe's network of high-speed lines is expanding into Germany and Belgium. The latest to open, Lille-Brussels, illustrates what can be achieved by imagination and investment: five years ago Paris-Brussels took two-and-a-half hours in one of a handful of trains; today, Thalys trains ply almost hourly between these cities, taking just 85 minutes.

**Slowest trains** There are still plenty of charming branch lines, particularly in

eastern Europe, where many a happy hour can be spent getting nowhere in particular at little more than running pace (what about Balatonfenyves-Csiszta in Hungary: 15 km in 50 minutes?), but sadly most of these are outside the scope of the Cook's timetable.

At least one international journey can be just as tedious, however - witness the 10-hour trip (when running to time, unlikely!) between Sofia and Thessaloniki. Poorly maintained track and long border stops conspire to give an average speed of 22mph for the 354-km journey.

**Most comfortable trains** The five-strong European timetable editorial team vote Germany's sleek white ICE Europe's best-appointed train. The latest French TGV designs come a close second, and Eurostar, at nearly a quarter of a mile long, certainly makes a lasting impression. These are only a few of the high-speed designs now to be found.

**Worst trains** London commuters may have their own ideas on this one, but for a unique experience try the isolated Albanian system. It is now much improved, but past problems with the theft of seats, and even bits of track, have given this system more than its fair share of problems.

**Longest run** The celebrated seven-day trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway is detailed in the Thomas Cook Overseas Timetable. Less well known is a train which, in the European Timetable, merits a table to itself, subtitled "the most outlandish train in Europe".

Running on Saturdays from Berlin, the various portions of this unnamed train reach beyond Europe to such diverse places as Saratov, Agmol (Kazakhstan), Rostov and Novosibirsk, the latter of which is reached in the early hours of Thursday morning after a journey of some 5,654 kilometres.

**Shortest run** The shuttle services between Orleans and Les Aubrais in France, and between Coimbra and Coimbra B (junction) in Portugal both officially traverse 2 km of line. No doubt the dedicated team at Thomas Cook will now be deluged with mail quoting metres or chains.

The Thomas Cook European Timetable (edited by Brendan Fox) costs £3.40 at branches and foreign exchange counters of Thomas Cook, or by post from Thomas Cook Publishing, PO Box 227, Peterborough PE3 6PU.

Brendan Fox

هنا من الاصل

urich Opera House

## CHECK OUT

### Deal of the week

London Heathrow to Los Angeles International for £199 return, including all taxes, if you book with STA Travel (0171 361 6262) by close of business today and travel on specific Air New Zealand flights between April and June.

### And the best of the rest

Chalet operator Meriski is offering a special deal on one-week holidays in the French resort of Méribel, departing on 15 March. Prices are from £549 to £675 per person, based on two people sharing a twin or double room with en-suite bathroom, and include British Midland flights from Heathrow to Geneva. Call 01451 844788 for more information.

Celebrate Easter with a difference by dropping in on the birthplace of Pontius Pilate - in Perthshire, so they say. Natural history enthusiasts can explore Scotland's hills and lochs from 10-13 April for £299 including accommodation, meals and guide and visit Fortingall - arguably the place of the Roman governor's birth. Call Naturetrek on 01962 733051.

Wildlife Worldwide has spaces on a two-week night-and-day Kalahari Safari, departing 7 and 21 March. The cost is £2,995 for flights, tented camp accommodation, meals and guide. For details, call 0181 667 9158.

Weekend breaks in The Gambia are now feasible, thanks to an extra charter flight from Gatwick. The Gambia Experience (01703 730888) is offering four nights at the Kairaba Beach hotel for £359, departing 6 or 27 March.

Walk in the Himalayas with Sherpa Expeditions. The tour departs on 11 March and costs £695 (excluding flights). Call 0181 577 2717

Spring? Romance? Take off to Venice with Lakes and Mountains Holidays, departing 10 April from Gatwick. Prices start at £367 per person for two nights in a three-star hotel in the centre of the city. Call 01329 844 405.

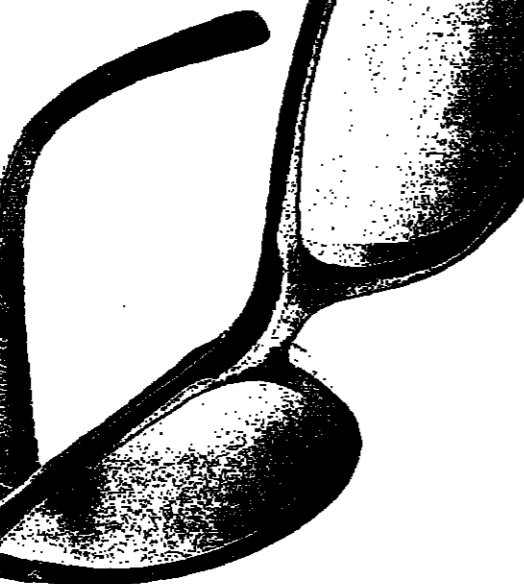
Four-day trip to D-Day Normandy Beaches departing 12 March, from £119 per person, including excursion to Bayeux. Travel by coach. Call Legat. 01709 839839.

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April cruises around the Greek islands from £489 per person for seven nights, with Seafarer Cruising and Sailing Holidays. Call 0171 234 0500

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Read it. Explore the globe from your armchair with the newly reprinted *Illustrated*, published under the aegis of the Royal Geographical Society. The weighty tome (Scriptum Editions, price £45) takes you on a historical adventure via the photographer's lens. It's a beautiful book, capturing moments such as Scott finding Amundsen's empty tent at the South Pole, and Tenzing Norgay photographing Hillary on the peak of Everest.

Jane Slade



San Francisco nights: Californian cities are now more accessible from Britain than ever before

Photograph: Frederic Larson/AP

# Stay in a film...

If you're going to San Francisco you may as well experience a little fantasy. Don't choose a big, anonymous hotel, advises Richard Gilbert - go to Hollywood

Two hours after arriving in San Francisco I was in the bar of the Hotel Rex, clearly watching my dollar bills being torn up and then reassembled by a magician.

This was an appropriately quirky introduction to the Rex and to Joie de Vivre, the unusual hotel group that owns it. "Most hotels are in the business of just selling sleep - I'm in the business of selling dreams", those are unlikely words from a hotel tycoon. But Chip Conley, the 37-year-old president of Joie de Vivre, is not in the mould of the corporate suits who run the Hiltons and Marriotts across the US. His group has 13 small hotels in San Francisco, most of them themed and all unorthodox. Their total capacity of 800 rooms could easily fit into a single one of the city's big hotels such as the Hyatt Regency, and they are much cheaper.

I chose the Rex on Sutter Street because it is the only hotel I know which is built around an antiquarian bookshop. It is the nearest the West Coast gets to the Algonquin, with authors' readings, book signings, literary discussions and a decor that evokes Twenties salons, with the work of

pre-war San Francisco artists on the walls. Even the lifts play a part - they are papered with pages from the *San Francisco Social Register* of the period.

Conley opened his first hotel when he was only 26. While working in real estate, he met the rock promoter Bill Graham and heard rock groups and comedians regularly complain that San Francisco hotels were too stuffy and expensive. He raised \$1m, took over a run-down flophouse on the edge of the seedy Tenderloin district, and opened the Phoenix. It quickly became a hit, and rock and film celebrities poured in - Bowie, Baez, Dunaway, Ronstadt, kd lang. Despite some "Tour Manager Suites" among the 40 rooms, prices are reasonable.

Since then, Conley has opened a dozen more boutique hotels in a city usually associated with grand hotels such as Mark Hopkins and Sir Francis Drake. Strangely, the wide range of flourishing magazines on American newsstands was the original model for Conley's niche hotels. He was convinced that consumer magazines had a strong and distinctive customer base that was missing in the hotel business. Before developing a new hotel, he imagines a magazine that helps to define its style and decor, so the Phoenix is Rolling Stone, and the Maxwell, with its retro décor and velvet curtains, is the *Saturday Evening Post*.

I checked into the Bijou, a film-themed hotel on Mason Street, which I assumed would be identified with *Variety*, or the movie magazine *Entertainment Weekly*. All 65 rooms are named after a film shot in or featuring San Francisco. I stayed in *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?*, where the walls are decorated with black-and-



white stills of Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. Down the corridor were *Bullitt*, *Jagged Edge*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Conversation*. The lobby is designed like a cinema box office, complete with popcorn and Tootsie Rolls. The Bijou is the only hotel I have found that has a free private cinema for guests. Every evening it shows two San Francisco-linked films in a mini-cinema. You don't get valet parking or 24-hour room service, but who needs that when you get *The*

*Maltese Falcon* and *Escape from Alcatraz* free?

Most of the Joie de Vivre hotels are central. The Commodore on Sutter Street is targeted at visitors who want to discover the hidden treasures of San Francisco. Too many tourists arrive in the city, take a cable car to Fisherman's Wharf and then wonder why San Francisco has such a high reputation. Every room in the Commodore has a framed description of an unfamiliar attraction in the city, with directions

how to find it. Nob Hill Lambourne, on the edge of the financial district, is a favourite hotel among the wired generation and competitive young executives (*Byte?* *Business Weekly?* *Fitness Magazine?*). All 20 rooms have a laptop computer, a fax, a VCR and an exercise machine. It is so health-conscious that the mini-bar is stuffed with rice cakes, vegetarian chilli and organic wine. There's no chance of mint chocolates on your pillow at "turndown" time. Instead, you get beta-carotene vitamin pills wrapped inside a motto like an up-market fortune-cookie: "Dreaming permits us to be quietly and safely insane".

Chip Conley takes his maverick philosophy on niche hotels seriously, but at least he laughs at his own jargon, which he blames on a Stanford Business School background. He argues that the big hotel chains are still driven by superficial demographics, while Joie de Vivre relies on "psychographics". He is in no hurry to open up hotels in other cities.

"Someone offered me a site in Houston the other day. Why would I want to go to Houston twice a month? I am only interested in cities that I like." Yet in the summer Joie de Vivre is moving into a new area by opening California's first "boutique camp site" on the coast, an hour away from San Francisco. Conley claims that "It will have everything visitors like about camping without any of the stuff that keeps you from doing it." Sounds as if he has been reading *Field and Stream*.

For more information about Joie de Vivre hotels in San Francisco, call 001 415 835 0300 or in the US, 800 738 7477. Website: [www.joiedevivre-sf.com](http://www.joiedevivre-sf.com)

## Business-class banquet or bargain basement

Air fares to California are so low, says Simon Calder, that it could be time to trade up

You work 22 hours and what do you get? A flight to California and back. Read this sentence carefully: if you are lucky enough to earn the average British wage of £368 a week, then you can earn the money for a round trip to California and back in less than the time you will spend in flight.

Air New Zealand is so concerned to fill the seats on its new flight from Heathrow to Los Angeles that it has cut the economy fare to below £200, at least through some discount travel agents. See *Deal of the Week*, above left.

Some sophisticated travellers are taking advantage of the absurd prices to trade up. Discounted economy tickets are dragging down premium fares: if you're going to San Francisco, then "upper class" on Virgin Atlantic can be bought through agents for £3,047 return instead of the £4,584 regular fare - as long as you ask for a flight on Continental Airlines.

It works like this. Earlier this month, Virgin Atlantic teamed up with Continental for a "codeshare"

arrangement - increasingly common in the murky world of aviation. Each airline has an allocation of seats on the other's transatlantic routes. So Virgin's daily departure from Heathrow to San Francisco has two flight numbers: VS19 for Virgin, CO8419 for Continental. You sit in the same seat, sipping the same champagne as other "upper class" passengers, but because your ticket is issued by Continental not Virgin you save more than £1,500 on the deal.

Although US and UK airlines are doing what they can to protect business-class and first-class revenue on their most profitable routes, carriers from other parts of the world are taking advantage of "fifth-freedom" rights to offer excellent premium-class fares across the Atlantic.

"Fifth-freedom" means an airline is allowed to fly between two points, neither of which is in its country of origin - Air India between Manchester and Rome, for instance. Because most passengers use a carrier based in either their own or their destination country, smaller players have to reduce fares.

Air New Zealand, the airline responsible for cutting to the bone economy fares from west London to the Pacific Coast, has an excellent business-class product. Taking the comfortable way to California will cost you more than 10 times as much as the lowest economy fare, but at £2,081 return (through

discount agents) you could take a partner in business class and pack a couple of pals into economy for less than BA's Club World fare.

If you're prepared to change planes en route, the fare falls still further. TWA flies daily from Gatwick to its home base in St Louis, with onward connections to San Francisco and Los Angeles, for £1,845 return through Trailfinders. Airline Network has a deal from London, Birmingham or Manchester to San Francisco via Paris for £2,115 return.

Continental (the real thing, not Virgin Atlantic in disguise) is rapidly becoming a key player in the regions. It flies from Birmingham and Manchester, via its hub at Newark, to either San Francisco or Los Angeles for £2,946 (through Quest Worldwide); from July it will also fly from Glasgow.

Quest Worldwide also has one of the lowest-ever business-class transatlantic fares to the other coast: Heathrow to New York on Kuwait Airways for £650 return. The catch, for those who regard good-quality alcohol as a perk of business-class travel, is that Kuwait Airways is a dry airline.

Many discount travel agents offer cheap business-class fares. Those mentioned here are Airline Network (0500 747757); Quest Worldwide (0181-546 6000); Trailfinders (0171-937 5400).

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# Looking for a New England

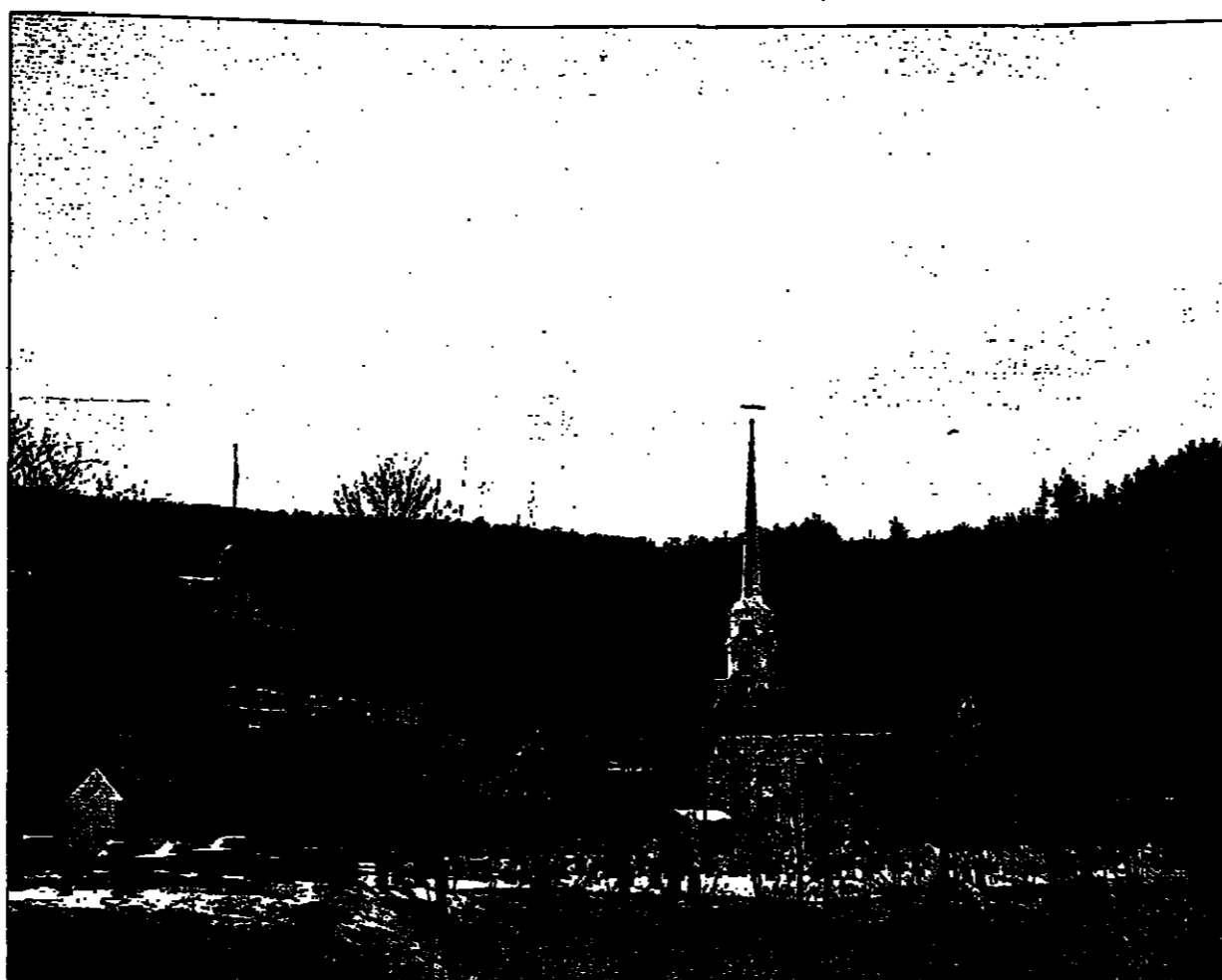
Check into a small town in Vermont where you can enjoy real life as well as the winter wonderland of ski slopes, writes Cathy Packe

I stayed in a nice B&B in Manchester the other week. It was quite near the centre of town, handy for the shops. *Titanic* was on at the cinema down the road. And it hardly took any time at all to get to the ski slopes. Well, no, it wasn't Manchester, England. It was Manchester New England. Not the industrial one in New Hampshire, whose frozen wastes feature on our TV screens once every four years, when the presidential primaries are in town. This was Manchester, Vermont, a pleasant town with a population of fewer than 5,000 people, whose streets are lined with elegantly proportioned 19th-century houses, many of them set in their own parkland.

The most historic part of town was originally a mill town called Factory Point. The blue-collar workers lived here, while Manchester Village, at the other end of the street, was the more attractive part of town. Towards the end of the last century the industries declined, and another source of income was needed. Tourism was developing up the road in the Village, and in order to cash in on the benefits, Factory Point changed its name to Manchester Center. Many of the buildings along Main Street still have a commercial use, but instead of housing the electrical store or the barber's shop, they are more likely to have a sign up advertising Ben and Jerry's ice-cream.

A good reason for basing a ski holiday in Manchester is that there are no mountains. Skiing is one of the activities you can choose to indulge in while you are there, because there are several resorts nearby. This is not a winter wonderland, like many of the chi-chi resorts of the Rockies, whose sole reason for existing is the tourist industry, and whose holiday-makers are there to be seen. In Manchester, anyone who doesn't ski, or who wants a ski-free day, can relax without feeling out of place.

This makes it feel quite different from established Vermont resorts like Stowe in the north of the state; indeed, a two-centre trip including both areas would be quite possible in travel-friendly New England, and also enable you to call in at the adjacent



Veering towards Vermont: Stowe is easy to combine with the Manchester area. Photo: Peter Hardy/SkiShoot-Offshoot

Trapp family home. You need a car in order to take full advantage of the slopes in Vermont, but the roads are kept clear of snow, there are no major highways to negotiate, and parking in the resorts is free.

The nearest ski areas to Manchester are Bromley, Vermont's Sun Mountain (so-called because when other resorts are grey and freezing its slopes are still likely to be bathed in sunlight), and Stratton - larger and often colder, but more challenging, with a greater variety of black diamond and double diamond runs. Both of these are about 15 miles from Manchester. Beyond Bromley is Magic Mountain, and farthest away, but still only a 45-minute drive, is Okemo, just outside the town of Ludlow.

The beauty of all these resorts is that no matter how limited your ability to ski, there are trails that take you from the top of the mountain right down to the base. In many resorts beginners are forced to stay at the

lower altitudes, without ever seeing the view from the top, or enjoying the exhilarating feeling of a long run. And an advantage of day-trip skiing is that if you want a day off, or you want to ski somewhere else, perhaps because the weather is better in another resort, you are not committed to

## SKI TIP

When using the new types of shaped, or carving, skis, start by feeling your outside big toe as you tilt the ski on to its edge. As your speed increases, feel your inside ankle bone, then move your thigh inwards for more power.

Chris Exall

a week-long package in the same place. Stratton and Okemo (but not, sadly, Bromley) have a reciprocal agreement, so that the same pass can be used in both resorts. It is usually possible to get a pass that is valid for several days, making the daily cost cheaper, and it works out cheaper still if you book a deal through the Vermont tourist office for accommodation and ski pass combined.

These Green Mountain resorts are within weekend distance for the townies of New York and Boston, so the slopes tend to get packed on Saturdays and Sundays. But during the week it can be extremely quiet, which means it is possible to combine five peaceful days skiing with a weekend in the city at either end of your holiday.

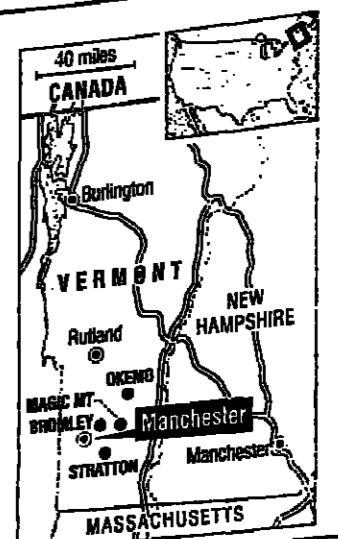
Yet Manchester is not the place to stay if what you want in a ski holiday is some kind of ski-in-ski-out accommodation. All the resorts have a full range of hotels, motels

## MAKING FOR MANCHESTER

Money upfront: Cathy Packe paid £80, including tax, to fly from Gatwick to Newark on Virgin Atlantic (01293 747747).

Package deal: a three-day package, including accommodation and lift passes, at The Inn at Manchester (001 802 362 1793), cost her £190.

Net work: Details of all the resorts mentioned can be found on the Internet - the addresses are www.[resort name].com



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### COLORADO

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Breckenridge Lower slopes 140cm, upper slopes 150cm. All runs open. 18cm new snow. CALIFORNIA Mammoth Lower 510cm, upper 630cm. Snow. Heavenly Lower 285cm, upper 465cm. All runs open

Information supplied by the Ski Club of Great Britain 0181-410 2000.

and slope-side condominiums, but one of the drawbacks, particularly in a small, purpose-built resort, is that, at the end of the day, it is just a ski resort. The après-ski may be lively, but it will be entirely predictable.

Manchester has bars and restaurants, too, but with a more down-home kind of feel, and with the added attraction of the normal things you find in a town, such as shops and cinemas. Much of the accommodation is bed and breakfast - usually in inns that are the equivalent of our country house hotels.

It would be a shame to go to a ski resort and spend the whole time shopping, but it would be perverse, too, to go to the States and not shop at all. Manchester is the Vermont centre for the outlet stores, smallish shops devoted to one designer or another, with the kind of discounts that make you understand why anyone would want to shop till they drop. Ralph Lauren,

Donna Karan and Calvin Klein stand side by side with more moderately priced labels such as J Crew and Jones New York. At the moment, in most stores the already low prices are reduced even further because the sales are on.

Several buildings in and around Manchester have some connection with the area's most famous son, Norman Rockwell, a native of nearby Arlington. There is a museum there in his honour, and there are various places in Manchester where he apparently painted some of his most famous pictures. But this week, the people of southern Vermont have been concentrating on the achievements of other local heroes.

They keenly followed the winter Olympics, because three snowboarders from Stratton were in the running for medals. Vermont may be a long way from Nagano, but Japan's winter Olympics could help to put this area on the map.

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## INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

هَذَا من الأصل

# Winning moments

Composition, light, mood – what makes a great picture? Simon Calder finds out

Travel photography can cause nearly as many heated arguments as Middle East peace negotiations – or at least when the judges of the The Independent/Wanderlust magazine/Nikon Travel Photograph of the Year Competition are picking the winners. We attracted more entries from amateur photographers than ever before, many of them of outstanding

The competition embraced four categories: the Natural World, Action, Face-to-Face and Black & White. Whittling down the thousands of images to 10 finalists in each category was a week's work for Geoffrey Roy, Wanderlust's professional photographer. We then convened in Windsor for the day to judge the eventual winners.

In the Natural World category, we felt that Tony Ord's feeling for snow, light and composition caught this family of emperor penguins perfectly – and shows the photographic rewards you can expect if you travel to the Larsen Ice Shelf of Antarctica in November. Shirley Bell's action shot of buffalo-racing on the island of

Sumbawa in Indonesia (shown on the cover of this week's Time Out) tells more in an instant than moving pictures ever could. The winner of the Black & White category, Giles Angel, made the most of a moment in the souk in Marrakesh. "For a brief moment a gap appeared, and a boy came cycling towards me."

The visages beaming from Michael Ford's image of the Trans-Aral train in Uzbekistan won him both the Face-to-Face category and the overall prize. "My fellow travellers had just done a bit of DIY air-conditioning by removing the window. As they leaned out, I clicked."

At the awards ceremony at Destinations '98 in Olympia, London, yesterday, the three category winners each received a Nikon F50 with 35-80mm lens, plus a Bellingham Photo Holiday bag.

Mr Ford was presented by Nikon with an F70 SLR with 24-120mm AF-D lens, worth at least £1,000, while Bellingham gave him a 335 camera bag and Vendite photo vest (total value £300 plus). Plus one prize money can't buy a photographic commission from The Independent.



In the picture: winning photographs from the Independent/Wanderlust/Nikon competition – top left, Michael Ford's overall winning shot of Trans-Aral Express, Uzbekistan; above, winner of the Black and White category, Marrakesh souk by Giles Angel; left, Natural World winner, Larsen Ice Shelf, Antarctica by Tony Ord; far left, runner up of the Face to Face category, portrait of Bur Safaga by Chris Christoforou

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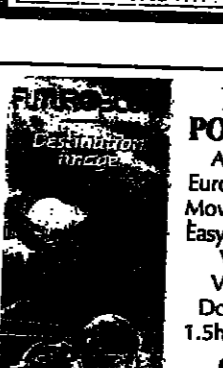
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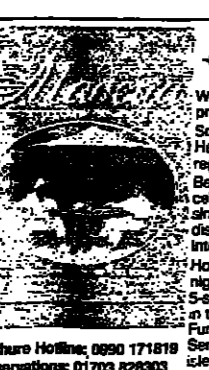
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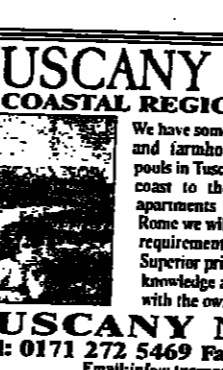
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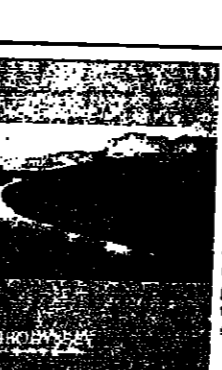
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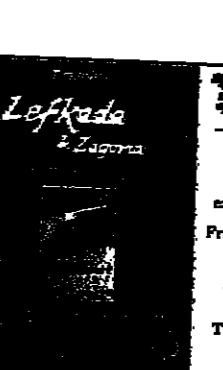
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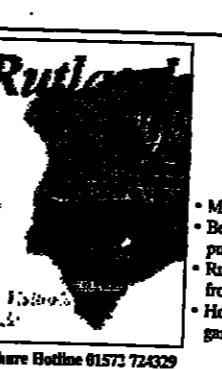
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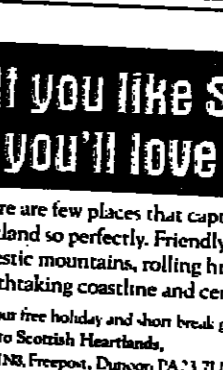
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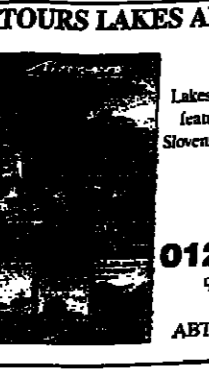
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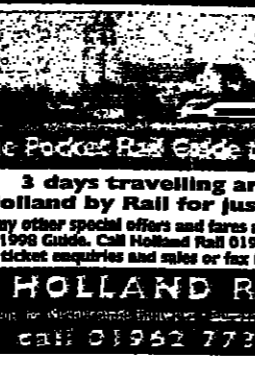
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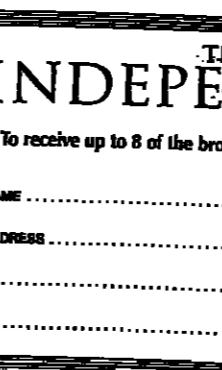
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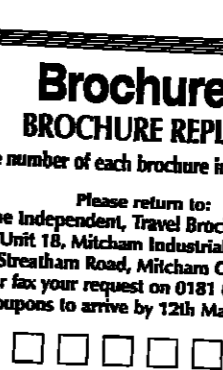
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# 48 hours in Tallinn

For a weekend break, visit the capital of Estonia before it is ruined by success, writes **Gordon Sander**

## Why go now?

Because of the opportunity to witness an economic miracle in the making. Of all the former Soviet republics, little Estonia (population 1.5 million) has been the quickest to adapt to capitalistic ways, a distinction that was confirmed this summer when the European Union officially invited it to join negotiations for membership, while pointedly ignoring the other two Baltic republics, Latvia and Lithuania. And because this may be your last chance to see this extraordinarily well preserved old city before it drowns in neon and billboards.

## Beam down

A city-break package to Tallinn costs less than a flight-only. Using Estonian Air from Gatwick to Tallinn, Regent Holidays (0117-921 1711) have a package for £199, including three nights in a hotel; the lowest airfare is around £240. Alternatively, find a flight to Helsinki and take a boat from there: Tallinn is a favourite ferry foray for Finns.

## Check in

The basic Regent Holidays package puts you up in the Dzintel, a new three-star hotel two miles from the city centre. A more upmarket option is the Palace, on the edge of the old city (Vabaduse väljak 3; 00 372-6-407-300); doubles here are £130 a night. Or try the four-star Olympia (Liivalaia 33; 00 372-6-315 315), a 10-minute walk from the old city. This 26-storey ex-tourist high-rise offers all the amenities, including sauna and pool; doubles are £100.

The Rataskaevu Hotel (Rataskaevu 7; 00 372 2 441939), a friendly, well-preserved old hotel located in the middle of the old city, is a great mid-range buy; doubles £50, double deluxe £60.



where you will probably be staying. This is centred on Raekoja plats – Town Hall Square – and is still surrounded by most of its 2.5-km medieval wall. Make your way to the excellent new tourist office (00 372 6313 940) on the square.

## Take a hike

The best way of exploring old Tallinn is via the twin towers of the Viru Gate, in the east side of the Lower Town walls. From here amble along Viru to the corner of Vene; continue on to Raekoja plats. From here, climb Pikkajalg (yes, it really is spelled that way), which is lined with the houses of medieval Hanseatic merchants and gentry, up to the heights of Toompea. Use the look-out points off Toom-Kooli, Kohtu, and Rahukohu to regain your bearings and decide where you wish to descend.

## Long lunch

Now that you have zoomed around medieval Tallinn, slow down and enjoy a home-cooked meal at Vanaema Jures (Rataskaevu 10/12; 00 372 6313 928), which literally means "Grandma's place". The food is fresh – and delicious. Try the kana and pannkook (chicken and pancake).

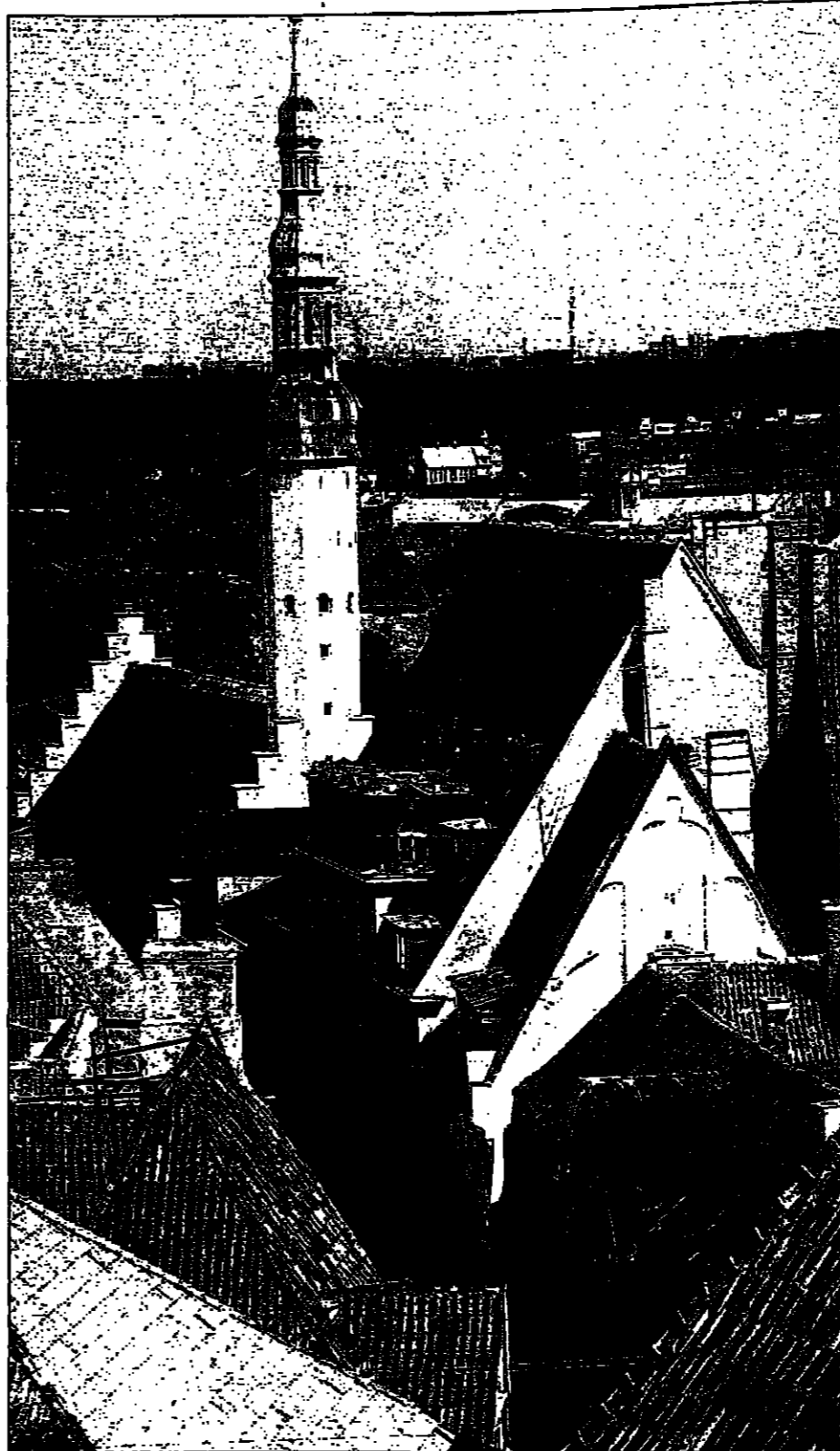
## Cultural afternoon

Thus fortified, check out the clay pipes, zithers, and other historical memorabilia from Estonia's furrowed past at the City Museum at Vene 17 (00 372 441 829).

Next, saunter across the street, and back through several centuries to the Dominiklaste klooster, or Dominican monastery, at Vene 16. The ancient monastery, founded in 1246, was headquarters for the Scandinavian monks who converted heathen Estonia to Christianity. At one time the monastery had its own brewery and hospital; however, it was ruined by plunder during the Reformation and razed by a fire in 1521. Today it houses Estonia's largest collection of stone carvings – and, I swear, a battalion of ghosts.

## Window shopping

All sizes and styles of traditional jumpers, hats, and gloves can be found at stalls in the flower market close to the Viru gates on Viru, as well as along Muurivahe, where the market runs along the city walls. A knitted jumper, the most popular buy for foreigners, costs about £20. Other suggested stops: Galerii Molen, on the corner of Vana Viru, a craft shop with a magnificent "art garage" in the basement and Helina Tilk, on Voorimehe puestee, a porcelain emporium.



## Demure dinner

Sit down for some blini and bear or one of the other substantive native dishes at Eesti-Tall (Dunkri 4/6; 00 372 6313 755), a carefully restored, two-floor restaurant in a converted stable.

## Night-life

Unlikely, but true: Tallinn boasts the largest discotheque in all of Baltica and Scandinavia, called Dekoltee (Ahtri 10). Among other things this gargantuan, 3,200-square-metre dance house, sited in a former Soviet electronics goods factory, features a huge, oval dance floor; three long bars staffed by cheery, luminous-dressed young Estonians; and a state-of-the-art laser show. Admission is all of 80 crowns, roughly £5.

## Sunday morning go to church

A minute's walk from the old square, Niguliste Church was originally the hub of Tallinn's 13th-century settlement. The early Gothic north doorway dates from the church's first construction; the rest goes back only to the 15th, making the building a virtual newcomer for this venerable city. At the foot of the slope on which Niguliste stands is what appears to be a demolition site. In fact

it's the deliberately preserved remains of the buildings that stood there prior to Soviet bombing of Nazi-occupied Tallinn in 1944 – another reminder of Tallinn's tragic and bellicose past.

## Bracing brunch

Spurge out on the immense, smorgasbord-like brunch offered at the Elysee (Liivalaia 33; 00 372 6315-315), the elegant restaurant of the Olympia Hotel. The spread, which cost 275 EEK (£13), includes krevetisalat (shrimp salad), lihavalk (plate of hams) and sokolaadigaits (chocolate ice-cream), not to mention the sight of little Estonian tots, dressed up in their Sunday best, bouncing around to live accordion music.

## Icing on the cake

Lastly, trot over to the famed Maiasmokk Kohvik, or Sweet-Tooth Café, at Pikk 16. You probably won't have space for any of the elegant pastries after the above repast, but you will enjoy the inter-war atmosphere of this famous tearoom, and the sight of old regulars mingling comfortably with the new, capitalistic lords of Tallinn.



**SIMON CALDER**

Does this sound like your most recent holiday? A 2am arrival at a military

airfield that's been pressed into service as a charter airport; a reckless ride on a battered bus to some God-forsaken half-built hotel, where a distorted disco is in full swing until dawn. The beach is accessible only by negotiating a flight of steps that would give a goat vertigo, and by picking your way across an eight-lane highway to a shabby stretch of sand that resembles a builders' yard. In 1988, possibly; in 1998, unlikely.

While Britain's mass market travel industry is characterised by economists as "mature", its behaviour is often plain immature. Original thinking is a rare commodity; when someone has a good idea, everyone tends to follow.

The current fad is for telling the truth. Now, most industries learned long ago that honesty is the best strategy; but the package tour business is behaving as though a bolt of enlightenment has just struck Britain's high-street travel agents, illuminating them in a glow of veracity.

Thomson, the UK's biggest tour operator, began the trend with its "telling it like it is" promise. This summer's brochures include the scores awarded to each location by holiday-makers who went there last summer. Take care when you're completing that inevitable questionnaire on the flight home: your comments will be used to rate each property for quality of accommodation, location and catering. Leafing through the brochures, you pick up pretty quickly the idea that the more expensive the holiday, the higher the score.

Now Co-op Travelcare has gone what it claims is one better by promising customers access to what is said to be the "truth book": the OAG Agents' Gazetteer.

All industries, whether second-hand cars or national newspapers, have their reference books. The Agents' Gazetteer is the one for the mass-market package holiday. It contains frank appraisals of mainstream holiday resorts, plus their hotels and apartment blocks.

Most travel agents carry the book, but hitherto have rarely shared its contents with customers. Not surprisingly, they prefer to rely for on brochures complete with ultra-blue skies and swimming-pools to sell.

The Co-op seems to be saying that this amounts to concealment of an important consumer resource, and promises to bring it out from under the counter. Yet having waded through a publication that has the bulk and interest value of the collected London telephone directories, I'm not convinced.

To test the extent to which the Agents' Gazetteer dishes the dirt on resorts and accommodation, I checked out the descriptions for my last couple of package holidays in Spain. In these two cases the so-called "truth book" is benign, even when compared with the operators' brochures.

The current Skyours brochure describes the Las Piramides complex in Playa de las Americas, Tenerife, as "No-frills accommodation with a variety of excellent facilities and activities on site. The main beach is a 15-minute walk away."

So long as you accept the view that playing table football and drinking copiously comprise "excellent fun-filled activities" (which most of my fellow guests seemed to), this strikes me as uncontentious. The Gazetteer concurs: "Surrounded by bars and supermarkets. Intended to look like a pyramid but not impressive. Plenty of amenities for families and younger people."

On the second test holiday, the Eva Mar apartments in Benidorm. I'd say the Gazetteer was rather too kind. "A pleasant 24-storey brick block, built 1987. Attractive open-plan layout though somewhat run down."

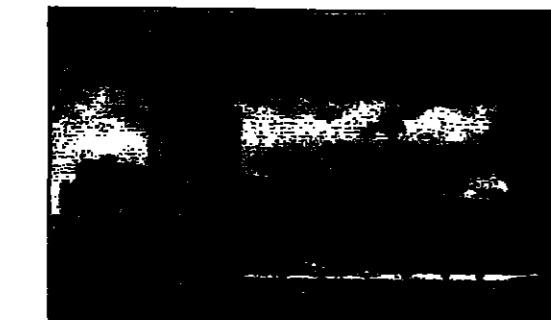
In my book, the words "pleasant" and "24-storey brick block, built 1987" are mutually incompatible, even when placed in the context of Benidorm. The Club Freestyle brochure takes a different tack: "If you're looking for a quiet night you've come to the wrong place! The Eva Mar is only 10 minutes' walk from the main centre of Benidorm and there are loads of restaurants, bars and shops nearby."

It's taken three decades and reams of new legislation, but holiday companies now have a strong incentive to tell the truth in brochures.

Anything that gives the consumer more ammunition in the battle to find a good-value holiday is to be commended, but I suspect that the Co-op's move comes about 10 years too late.

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Cash cost: 50p per minute at 0930. Winner selected at random after 11pm 10th March 1998. Usual Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

Tallinn old and new: Estonia's capital is a compact city - a medieval maze surrounded by a Soviet-style urban landscape. Photographs: Robert Harding/Simon Calder



## My private jet to Varna

It was the ultimate solo flight and ego trip: Ian Russell was the only passenger on a scheduled flight to Bulgaria

It should have been obvious to me straightaway. There was no check-in desk at Edinburgh airport for Air Via flight VIM 624 to Varna. Yet the early morning flight was listed on the departures screen, so at least my charter trip to Bulgaria's Black Sea coast wasn't a complete mystery to everyone. But why wasn't the usual motley queue snaking its way forward with just one thought - to head for the duty-free as soon as they had got rid of their cases?

There were long queues for flights to Jersey and Brussels, but as I squinted in vain at luggage labels on suitcases strewn around the busy terminal, it slowly dawned on me that maybe there was no one else flying to the city of Varna. The Servisair representative confirmed my suspicions. "Varna? Oh, there's only one passenger, I think." "Er, but that happens to be me." "Right, just wait until we clear these other flights and we'll get your case."

Half an hour later I got the call, a shout really, across the

now almost deserted check-in area to step forward with my baggage and be officially confirmed as the solitary soul boarding flight VIM 624. The young girl behind the counter had more of a sense of humour than her colleague: "Smoking or non-smoking?" she asked drily.

Upstairs in the departures lounge, my scheduled departure time drew ever closer. There had been no announcement, but the flight was shown on the screen. Five minutes before the 157-seater jet was due to take off I decided it was time to start asking questions. But just as I rose from my seat a man with a mobile phone burst in and loudly requested the passenger for the Varna flight to make himself known. I was speedily ushered through an exit door by my escort who, 20 yards down the corridor, passed me on to someone else, also in mobile-phone mode. I was hurried downstairs and out of the building into a waiting Transit minibus.

There's just you," said

my minder. "This doesn't happen very often."

It felt more wonderful than weird to be the only one climbing the steps to the big white, purple and green machine waiting to whisk me (plus five cabin crew and three flight crew) to eastern Europe. The smiling head of cabin crew greeted me with typical Bulgarian humour: "Hello, and welcome to your own private jet, sir."

Being the solo passenger for the following four hours proved to be a rewarding experience, with the cabin crew all anxious to improve their English. They explained that this was their last flight of the season; normally they'd return home with an empty aircraft. Because I was heading for Varna on a one-way ticket it was convenient for the airline to accommodate me - as long I found another route home.

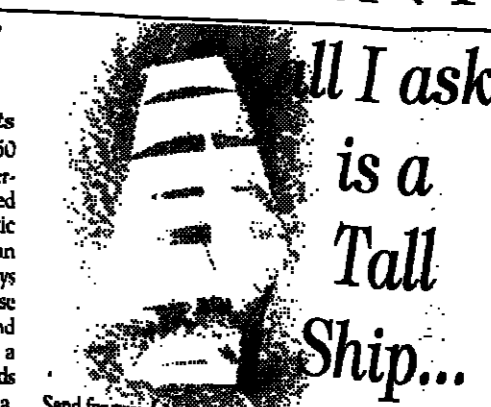
I did, a week later, from an airport further down the coast. Alas, this time I was just one of a horde of Scots returning home.

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# In the land of orchids

A day trip to a tropical rainforest? It's easy if you go to Kew, as Harriet O'Brien found out when she talked to the Palmer family

A serious place, and seriously good fun: the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew present a satisfying package. The fact that this is a place of important scientific research and conservation (with a staggering collection of more than 40,000 different living plants) is part of the pleasure of coming here.

There's no need for Kew to pander to its visitors with Millennium Dome-like theme park elements - the trees, plants and hot houses are in themselves spectacular and intriguing.

The only problem is where to start. Even when there isn't much in leaf or bloom outside, there's an enormous variety of life in see indoors, much of which will have particular appeal to children: the Evolution House, showing the story of plant development over 3,500 million years; the Princess of Wales Conservatory, where 10 different climates are regulated, and where marine life can be seen in a number of aquaria; the Temperate House, with its teas and citrus trees; and, of course, the Palm House, dating from 1844 - a magnificent arrangement of wrought iron and glass arching over a rich abundance of tropical vegetation and, on the lower floors, more fish and marine plants. In addition, Kew's Orchid Festival, showing at a variety of locations in the gardens, is on display until 29 March.

**The visitors**  
Sally Palmer, a social worker, took

her children Christopher, 10, Katherine, nine, and George, seven.

**Sally:** Kew is very good value if you spend some time here - it's not a place just to dip into quickly. There's so much, you hardly know where to begin. We wanted to look mainly at tropical plants because of school projects on rainforests, so we concentrated on the Princess of Wales Conservatory and the Palm House.

Quite apart from the plants, the architecture at Kew is stunning, especially the Palm House. It's such a fine example of great Victorian engineering - the walkway at the top, with its wonderful aerial views, is a particularly good feature. In fact, for me, the Palm House is a far more pleasurable building than the 1986 addition of the Princess of Wales Conservatory, however cleverly that has been designed to regulate numerous different climates.

We came to Kew mid-week, which was perfect: there were no crowds, everyone was very good-natured, and the children had ample space to wander around among the plants. They came away with an overall impression - and enthusiasm - rather than in-depth botanical knowledge. And on a cold, windy day, they certainly appreciated what a humid, tropical climate feels like.

**George:** It was lovely coming here on a dreary day and going to the tropical places - you get really warmed up. And the food was very good at the Orangery restaurant.



Katherine, George and Christopher Palmer make for the Palm House. Photos: Nicola Lurtz

I liked the Princess of Wales Conservatory best; the cacti there are fascinating - some are spiky, some hairy, some flat, some thin. Some even just lie flat along the ground. We also spent some time looking at the fish ponds and tanks in this glasshouse - it was very colourful. I'd like to come again.

**Katherine:** I liked the orchids in the Princess of Wales Conservatory - the whole place looked really pretty. And there was a display of bubbling mud there which was fun. I liked the fish, too - all you expect to see are plants and then you think, "Oh great, fish as well." They made it all seem much more real.

I learnt a lot by looking, but there are notices as well that teach you a bit, like what shape palms can be. I liked the cacti best - there were so many different kinds: some are tiny, some humongous. My favourite was one with white spikes that looked blue in some lights.

**Christopher:** The best glasshouse for arrangements was the Princess of Wales Conservatory. There were so many beds of exotic plants - really exotic.

I hadn't realised there were such different shades of green. It was amazing to see so many varieties of trees, plants and flowers - furry, spiky, even plasticity. And the flowers

had such good colours: they really stood out. The fish were fine, but I didn't think they were the point of the garden. They blended in well with the background.

The Palm House was very big. There were interesting containers for the plants, depending on size: flower pots, barrels, huge plastic pots. Some palms had red stalks, some were very, very tall, some tiny. The big bamboos were really interesting - if it's hot they grow at least 1m every day. They had cut away a section on one bamboo so you could see inside. It was hollow. You can climb some spiral steps to look at the big plants from on top. There was a thin balcony running around the big greenhouse

and at the other end another set of steps, and it was fun looking down from there.

Kew is a brilliant place to visit. I'd like to come back, especially in the summer - if it's a sunny day there'll be wonderful flowers outside as well as indoors.

**The deal**  
The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey (0181-332 5000) is a short walk from London's Kew Underground station (for the Victoria Gate) or New Bridge railway station (for the Main Gate). There is a car park beside the Brentford Gate.  
**Opening hours:** daily 9.30am-

## IN THE HOTHOUSE

Other spectacular glasshouses to visit include those in: Birmingham Botanic Gardens, Birmingham (0121-454 1860). Open 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun. Adults £3.80, children £2.10.  
Plantasia, Swansea (01792 474555). Open Tues-Sun, from 10am to 5pm. Entrance: adults £1.70, children £1.  
The Royal Botanic Gardens, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh (0131-552 7171): open daily 9.30am-5pm, entrance is free.  
Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire (01565 654822). Tues-Sun, 11am-5pm (last admission 3pm).

Admission to the park £3 per car - a further charge is made for entrance to the gardens: adults £2.80, children £1.80 (special rates for National Trust members).  
Wallingford, Cambo, Morpeth, Northumberland (01670 774283). The house itself is currently closed but the grounds are open to the public from 10am to 4pm daily. The "season" starts in April, when entrance to the house and grounds costs £4.80 (£12 family ticket), grounds only £2.80; children half price. National Trust members enter free of charge.

4.30pm. The glasshouses close before the gardens; for exact times, call 0181-940 1171.

**Admission:** adults £5, concessions £3.50, children £2.50 (a variety of Friends' membership or season ticket are also available).

**Refreshments:** two restaurants, the Orangery and the Pavilion, serve reasonably priced hot food and snacks. There is also a bakery near the Brentford Gate and a coffee shop at the Victoria Gate.

**Toilets:** are well signposted and cater for those in wheelchairs. **Shops:** serious plant books as well as (non-kitsch) Kew mementos can be bought at the Orangery shop or the bigger shop at the Victoria Gate.

# Birmingham waterfront wins well-deserved acclaim

Cared-for canals alleviate the surrounding architectural grief, says Simon Calder

Cyprus, watch out. According to Judith Chalmers on Wednesday evening, Birmingham's city-centre waterfront attracts even more visitors than the Mediterranean island's 2 million a year.

But on Thursday morning, a survey conducted from the Broad Street bridge suggested a level of tourist activity rather lower than Larnaca, Paphos and Limassol put together.

Only a chair, though, would deny the success of the regeneration that this week won the UK prize in British Airways' Tourism for Tomorrow awards. The chairman of the judging panel, David Bellamy, said: "The city-centre canal waterfront has been transformed from an underused derelict area to a thriving focus for recreation, leisure and tourism."

The centre-piece of the development, Brindley Place, is named after the 18th-century engineer who placed Birmingham at the hub of England's canal system. His work was amplified in the early 19th century by Thomas Telford, whose cast-iron footbridges still make an imprint amid the redevelopment.

He finished work on the project just as the railway revolution was getting under way, whereupon the canal system began a painfully extended decline.

To recognise the scale of the achievement, you need not look far beyond the Gas Street Basin for other examples of "underused, derelict areas".

As most of the world's great cities recognise, water is essential for flourishing urban life. Cared-for canals add significant light and space to Birmingham, moderating the architectural grief in which much of the city centre wallows.

A handsome city has been involved in a terrible road accident, the calamity being the construction of the most dehumanising road network of any British city centre.

You discover this when trying to find your way from New Street railway station to the Waterfront. Before the city was signed away - lock, stock and Bull Ring - to the motor car, you could cover the half-mile in a sprightly 10 minutes.

Today's tourist must battle through a system of underpasses and barriers

that look as if they were designed by Escher in collaboration with Kafka. The persecuted pedestrian's reward is more than just Brindley Place - a mock-warehouse in supermarket redbrick, whose main attraction for me is the Balu House.

The area includes the National Indoor Arena and the International Convention Centre, where, in May, the Eurovision Song Contest and the G8 Summit will be in unfamiliar proximity. (Cyprus can't boast that.)

On the other side of Broad Street, the canal splays out into a wedge of water, where more of the original brickwork has survived.

One last thing: the most frequently quoted "fact" about Birmingham is that it has more miles of canal - 32, to be precise - than Venice. Given the industrial history and sheer size of Birmingham, it would be surprising if the city of ring roads did not boast a higher number of artificial waterways than the city of Canaletto.

But the view from the Bridge of Sighs is more beautiful than the Broad Street bridge; Venice has solved the car problem.

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## The flavour of ...

Balsamic vinegar  
from Modena

The medieval city of Modena in northern Italy is famous for three things: Luciano Pavarotti (born there), Ferrari cars (made there) and balsamic vinegar (produced there, and drizzled over salads and strawberries all over the world).

For centuries, making the aromatic dark liquid was very much a family affair, using juice from the white Trebbiano grape. The barrels were matured in attics and the vinegar was passed down the generations for personal consumption, or for precious gifts, sometimes even part of a bride's dowry.

It was only as recently as 1967 that balsamic vinegar came into the market-place, when the town council of Spilamberto organised a competition for producers as part of its traditional St John's Fair. Soon a consortium was established to promote the production of traditional balsamic vinegar, which may still be sold only in bot-

ties bearing the producer's name.

The vinegar has now become an essential ingredient in the kitchens of the world's finest chefs. The food specialist Charles Carey, who began importing balsamic vinegar into the UK in 1980, puts its popularity down to its versatility.

"It combines the traditional flavours of northern Italy with modern cooking techniques," he says. "And now the supermarkets have discovered it and Delia Smith uses it, everyone is lapping it up."

However, he is worried that our love-affair with balsamic vinegar may be going a little too far.

"In the US, apparently, they are trying to make their own, clear white balsamic vinegar, because chefs don't like the way it colours sauces and dishes. That sounds positively ghastly to me."

St John's Fair, which still includes a balsamic vinegar competition, is held each June in Spilamberto, 16km north-east of Modena (details: Modena Tourist office (0039 59209520)).

Charles Carey's company, the Oil Merchant, imports and dis-

tributes balsamic vinegar. For stockists or mail order, call 0181-740 1335. Prices are from £4.74 for a 500ml, five-year-old bottle to £75 for a 50ml, 40-year-old bottle.

His main supplier is La Vecchia Dispensa in the village of Castelvetro, 6km outside Modena.

Across the square is a restaurant, Al Castello, run by members of the same family, where "they put balsamic vinegar on everything - Parmesan cheese, veal, even vanilla ice-cream," says Charles.

Modena is also famous for...

Cherries... from the nearby Vignola area. In April they have a cherry blossom festival.

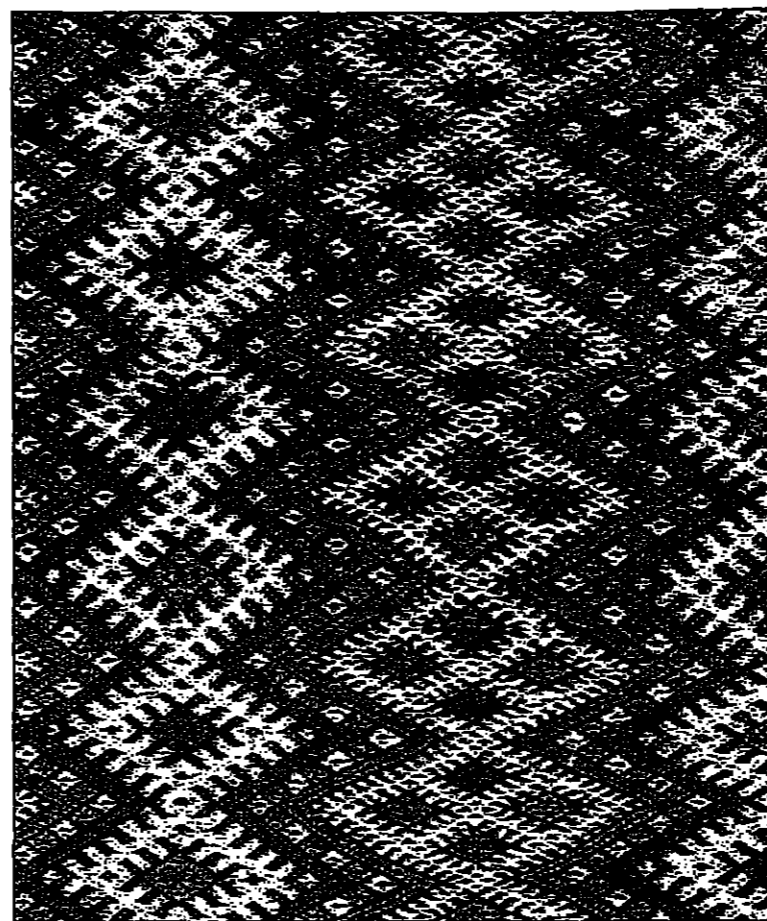
Parmesan cheese: the province of Modena produces a quarter of Italy's total.

Porke pigs are traditionally reared on the by-products of the cheese-making process. A popular dish is *zampone*, pig's trotter boned and stuffed with mince.

Nochio: a walnut liqueur that is only produced by local families who jealously guard their recipes.

Nikki Spencer

Hand-painted floor tiles, above and right, and Berber carpet, below



## The stuff of ...

Treasures from Morocco in north London

There is no need to wander through the souks of Marrakesh to find Arabic artefacts that look as though they have come straight from Aladdin's cave.

Much closer to hand than a Moroccan kasbah is Michael Davenport's treasure trove, lavishly displayed in new premises in London's Vauxhall. Here the collector or the spontaneous buyer can sift through a huge selection of sparkling brass lanterns, ancient walnut doors and windows, scores of hand-painted tiles and delicate wrought-iron work, and can admire both antiques and new designs from Davenport's Fez-based workshops.

Intricate mosaic and ceramic table-tops set on wrought-iron bases are a favourite with people who want a touch of Eastern exotica at home. All the tiles are hand-made, and cut into tiny pieces to make a mosaic design. There are Hasira rugs, made from palm fronds woven with coloured wools: they sell for around £125 each. An antique walnut couscous bowl, some 3ft in diameter, once used for tribal feasts, costs £140.

Davenport, an Oxford anthropology graduate, first fell in love with Morocco when he visited it as a student. He made friends with the local craftsmen and returned again and again, eventually deciding to set up his own business.

"There are many craft centres in Fez, where the

tradition of craftsman goes back for generations. The production and design in ceramics haven't changed. Clay is brought in by donkeys, and the kneading process right through to the firing is still as it used to be. Many of the brilliant colours used are still produced from crushed mineral ores."

Davenport imports both new and old pieces from Morocco in large quantities, thereby cutting down on the cost. He says it is often cheaper for customers to buy large items from his shop than to haggle in a Casablanca souk and then pay a hefty fee for shipment back to England.

A striking hand-painted vase standing around 3ft 6in high had a £150 price tag in his shop, and an impressive collection of large pots, vases and old butter-churns give the enthusiast a chance to pick up a real bargain.

The shop, now named Dar al Andalusi - it was formerly known as Marabout, and run out of a Fulham garage - offers a catalogue of mosaic designs in some 40 colours and undertakes commissions for tiling kitchens, bathrooms, swimming-pools and patios. Wall tiles cost around £60 per square metre, and hard-wearing cement floor tiles from around £25.

Dar al Andalusi is at Arch 11, Miles Street, Vauxhall, London SW18 1RZ (0171-720 9678, fax: 0171-627 5129).

Sally Staples

## GAMES

### STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT

More ruminations suggested by recent opinion surveys.

Lifestyle surveys are all very well in themselves, but it is only when you combine the findings of different polls that you arrive at a true picture of the degradation that affects the country today. Just look at the following figures:

1 per cent of adults buy more than 10 lottery tickets each week;

1 per cent of women, given one wish, would ask for a new husband;

1 per cent of women dunk biscuits in iced tea;

1 per cent of women hope for sex after office Christmas parties;

1 per cent of men wear the same underpants all week.

Only when you see the facts so clearly spelt out do you realise that these are all the same people - miserable women married to men in filthy underpants, so

desperate for a better life that they spend all their money on lottery tickets while dreaming of sex and a change of husband - and so full of self-loathing that they dunk their biscuits in iced tea.

3 per cent of people bath only once a week;

3 per cent of women love someone other than their husbands;

3 per cent of women over 16 have gone ten pin bowling in the last month;

3 per cent of women over 16 have done weightlifting in the last month;

3 per cent of women over 16 have played darts in the last month;

3 per cent of cats are more than 25 per cent overweight.

They will do anything, it seems, rather than go home to their unloved, unbathed husbands.

Still, the exercise will do them good, since they are probably as fat as their overfed pussy-cats.

### CHILD-BEATING WILLIAM HARTSTON

It's educational, it costs nothing, you can learn it in seconds and - best of all - it's a game at which I can beat my children. I cannot remember where I first met the game I am about to describe, but it suddenly came into my mind last week and I challenged my kids to a game. They drew a few times, and they lost a few times, and they gained some good practice at elementary arithmetic, but they never won (except for once, when I had a perfectly good excuse which for the moment eludes me).

Here's how it goes: you select nine cards from a pack bearing the numbers 1, 2... up to 9 - or you can just write the numbers 1 to 9 on nine small pieces of paper. It's a game for two players, starting with one of them picking one of the cards. All are turned

face upwards, so you can choose whichever number you want. The other player then picks one of the eight remaining cards, and the players continue selecting cards in turn. The object is to build up exactly three cards that add up to 15. The trick of the game is to realise that what you are doing is playing blindfold noughts-and-crosses, as may be seen by examining the numbers in this three-by-three array: Every three-number sum to 15 is a winning noughts-and-crosses line. So if the first player begins with 5, the second must reply 4, 8, 2, or 6. If the first starts with a corner number, only 5 will save the game. Easy when you know how. But don't tell the children.

4	3	8
9	5	1
2	7	6

### PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Kaffe Fassett, 60, painter and textile designer

The funny thing is, when I first started making mosaics, I would spend masses of money in antique shops. Trying to get chipped things, cracked things, for slightly less. Then, of course, I realised that the place to go these days is a good old car boot sale.

There's a local one that I really love. I walk down there every Sunday morning and shop the place out. For 50p or £1.50, I can get bowls and jugs and mugs and everything in the colours I like. I even bought a whole set of china for £15 one mad day, and smashed it up to put on a couple of great big clay pipes that I'm covering in very rich colours.

I can't bear to spend too much money on pots and tiles and things for mosaics, so what I do is this: I go to every car boot sale that I can find. It's a kind of game of trying to find all the colours I need, as cheaply as possible, even bargaining from 50p to 30p and so forth.

A friend of mine has a house in the country near Ryde, and we often go out to where amazing things happen in fields near airports. Great massive packs of people - God knows where they live - I have a feeling that they drive round the whole country doing all the car boot sales. They roll up with these enormous truckfuls of stuff: sinks and bath-plugs and things like that.

What I love about mosaics is that I'm taking the detritus of humanity and making it into something quite other - it's like making magic out of absolute drivelling crap which would otherwise be cluttering up the attic: stuff that everyone's just trying to throw out of their closets.

'The Magic Mosaics of Kaffe Fassett' will be in the Hillier Nurseries and Garden Centres exhibit in the Great Marquee (stand E17) at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, 19-22 May. Tickets: 0171-344 4343. Early booking is advisable.

### CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

The tournament at Linares has finally settled down into something more traditionally grandmasterly than had been suggested by the results of the early rounds. When the very best players in the world meet one another, generally around two-thirds of the games end in draws, yet the first three rounds at Linares produced seven decisive results from nine games. Normal service was resumed in rounds four and five, in both of which all the games ended in draws.

Scores after five of the 14 rounds are as follows: Shirov, Anand, Kasparov and Kramnik 2½ out of 4; Svidler 2½ out of 5; Ivanchuk 1½ out of 5; Topalov 1 out of 4.

As the following game from round four shows, a draw can be just as exciting as a decisive result. Peter Svidler has often shown great skill in wriggling out of desperate-looking positions, and in this case his Houdini skills were tested to the utmost.

White's 7.Bb5+ is an unusual move, but it worked very well as the bishop, apparently offside on a4, re-entered the game via c6 and d5. Black's play relied on his ability to support the knight on c4, but after 18.a4 his position was already looking desperate.

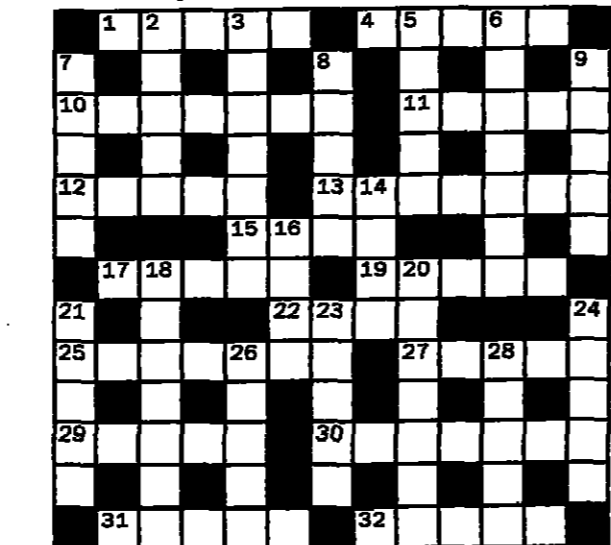
White wisely refrained from 19.axb5, when Ne5 gives Black a good game, and after 19.Nxd4 Black had to exchange his bishop on g7, leaving his king's defences

looking very weak. The real crisis came after 24.e5! when 24...Bxc6 would lose quickly to 25.Qxg6+. Svidler defended coolly, forcing White to sacrifice a piece, but his 29...Rc8 and 30...Rc5, while the only defence to White's growing threats, looked desperate. After 32.dxc5! Black would reach a lost endgame with 32...Qxd3 33.Rg3+, so was forced to continue as he did. This led, after 35...Kg8, to a position in which White had rook and three pawns for bishop and knight, but his 36.Re1? was a bad mistake. Instead 36.Qg6 gives White every prospect of winning, though Black is still fighting after 36...Qe7 37.Rxb5 Qxc6.

White: Veselin Topalov  
Black: Peter Svidler  
1 d4 Nf6 22 a5 Rb8  
2 c4 g6 23 Rc6 Bb7  
3 Nc3 d5 24 e5 Ne5  
4 cxd5 Nxd5 25 Rxd6+ Kh8  
5 e4 Nxc3 26 Bx7 Rxf7  
6 bxc3 Bg7 27 e6 Rf8  
7 Bb5+ c6 28 Bg3 Kh7  
8 Ba4 0-0 29 Rg4 Rc8  
9 Ne2 c5 30 Be5 Rc5  
10 0-0 Nc6 31 Rg7+ Kh8  
11 Be3 Na5 32 dxc5 Ngg7  
12 Rb1 Nc4 33 Qg6 Rf6  
13 Bg5 h6 34 Bxf6 cxf6  
14 Bb4 b6 35 Qxb6+ Kg8  
15 Bc6 Rb8 36 Re1 Nxe6  
16 Bd5 Ba6 37 b4 Ng7  
17 Qd3 b5 38 Qf4 Qd5  
18 a4 cxd4 39 Qg3 Kf7  
19 Nxd4 Bxd4 40 Qc7+ Kg6  
20 cxd4 Nd6 41 Qg3+ Kf7  
21 Rf1 Rb6 42 Qc7+ draw

### CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3546 Saturday 28 February



#### ACROSS

- Nobles (5)
- Layers of wedding cake (5)
- Wash (7)
- Tea container (5)
- Greek bread (5)
- Wonder (7)
- Amphibian (4)
- Slumber (5)
- Serving spoon (5)
- Second-hand (4)
- Since (7)
- Dispute (5)
- Relative (5)
- Poetic language (7)
- Malicious (5)
- Impress (5)

#### DOWN

- Break out (5)
- Spread from centre (7)
- Be liable for (5)
- Fundamental (7)
- Incline (5)
- Play (5)
- Varieties (5)
- Lazy (4)
- Literary work (4)
- Reading-desk (7)
- Unyielding (7)
- Dark wood (5)
- Brown tint of old photographs (5)
- E African country (5)
- Overture (5)
- Shine (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:  
ACROSS: 5 Sacks, 8 Suffrage (Saxifrage), 9 Hardy, 10 Election, 11 Steel, 14 Web, 16 Battle, 17 Ibidem, 18 Don, 20 Morn, 24 Jackboot, 25 Peril, 26 Contempt, 27 Stale, DOWN: 1 Aster, 2 Orion, 3 Write, 4 Ignore, 6 Abattoir, 7 Kedgeree, 12 Cessment, 13 Official, 14 Wed, 15 Bin, 19 Orator, 21 Skate, 22 Roomy, 23 State.

### BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

East-West game; dealer North

North  
♠ 9  
♥ 9 7 5 3  
♦ Q J 10 6  
♣ A Q 8 6

West  
♠ Q J 10 7  
♥ A 2  
♦ K 7 4 2  
♣ J 9 3

East  
♠ 6 4 3 2  
♥ K Q  
♦ A 9 3  
♣ 10 7 4 2

South  
♠ A K 8 5  
♥ J 10 8 6 4  
♦ 8 5  
♣ K 5

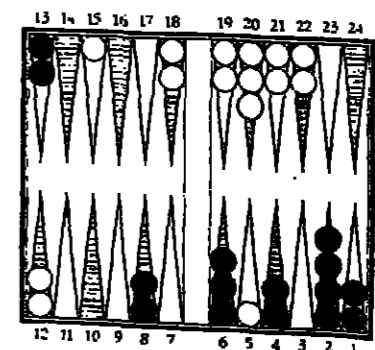
With high hopes of making a game contract in which he had at least four losers in top tricks, South squandered the chance that he had been given by the favourable opening lead.

After two passes, South opened One Heart and North responded Three Clubs. This "force after passing" guaranteed support for hearts and was equivalent to a raise to at least Three Hearts showing where his values lay at the same time. South signed off firmly with Three Hearts but North did not heed the Gyron's warning and went on to game.

West led ♠ Q against Four Hearts, and the play to the first four tricks was easy. After winning with ♠ A, declarer played off three rounds of clubs to discard one of his losing diamonds. Then he started on trumps, praying for a 2-2 break. The hearts broke evenly all right, but when East won the first round with his queen, he cashed ♠ A. Then, with a clear picture of what was happening, he led ♠ 10 for the defenders to make their top trump honours separately.

Nobody could criticise his start, but what should declarer have played at trick five? Having read what actually happened, you will spot South's mistake. He should have led dummy's last club and discarded his remaining losing diamond. Then there would have been no way left to the defenders to make more than two trump tricks.

### BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



This was Problem three in the Christmas Quiz. Black to play 54. Should he play: (a) 13/4 (b) 13/8, 13/9 or (c) 8/3, 8/4?

This problem returns to the theme of "pay me now or pay me later". Black is well ahead in the race (78-111 before the roll) and if he can clear his two outside points he should win easily. White must hit to win. Of the three plays (a) can be quickly eliminated. If Black is going to leave a voluntary shot he should leave the minimum number of hits. 13/4 leaves 17 hits while 13/8, 13/9 leaves only 12 and brings the last man nearer to home.

So, pay me now or pay me later? Playing 13/8, 13/9 now seeks to settle the game in one move and as Black has already doubled this seems to fit in with the policy of aggression once the cube has been given away. On the other hand, if Black plays 8/3, 8/4, unless he rolls a 6 next roll he should be able to play most rolls safely and White may have to give up his mid-point.

When this position occurred at the Double Fives club it occasioned vigorous debate. After several minutes the team playing Black moved 8/3, 8/4 and play went on to lose the game. In fact they made the right position where computers are better at weighing the possibilities than humans and can be relied upon.

One indicator that should lead you to the right play could be. It is much better to leave a voluntary shot here than there is a weakness in your opponent's board. Here, waiting for White to create that weakness is correct, and pay me later is the correct approach.

# Concrete socks OK

To be a skilled diver, while respecting the underwater environment, takes surprising skill. Eric Kendall learnt with the 'Diamond Reef'

Floating around at the bottom of a pool, slowly going nowhere, isn't the reason most people take up diving, but it's the essence of the sport. Staying still at depth, rather than flapping around, is the hardest thing to do, even in the current-free confines of the deep end. As with most skills, the only way to improve is through practice, a concept alien to many "qualified" divers.

The Diamond Reef - a few lengths of plastic tubing and some lead weights - can make all the difference. Not only will it make you a safer diver, whether you're a beginner or have years of experience under your weight belt; it will help save the environment, too, by reducing the amount of fragile marine life you crash into.

The system is an underwater obstacle course consisting of one or more diamonds (more like squares) through which you swim. They're made of rigid plastic tubing and are weighted to hang at whatever depth you choose. By the pool side, the squares look absurdly large; below the surface, the course looks a piece of cake and you probably wonder why you bothered to turn up. Then, as you swim slowly through, snagging your tank or depth gauge and perhaps clipping the tubing with your fins on the way out, it dawns on you that not only are you bigger than you realised, but you also move up and down a lot more.

Half the problem relates to diving paraphernalia. You can't possibly fail to notice how ungainly a fully equipped diver is on dry land; those fins were definitely not made for walking, and all the other clobber weighs a ton. The situation magically changes as you submerge, to find yourself weightless and fantastically mobile, operating effortlessly in a beautiful alien environment. It's certainly the only place I'll ever manage to do a "triple saliko with toe loop" without developing a limp, but it can also create a false sense of security. In absolute terms your performance remains towards the lower end of the marine scale, more sea slug than cavorting dolphin.

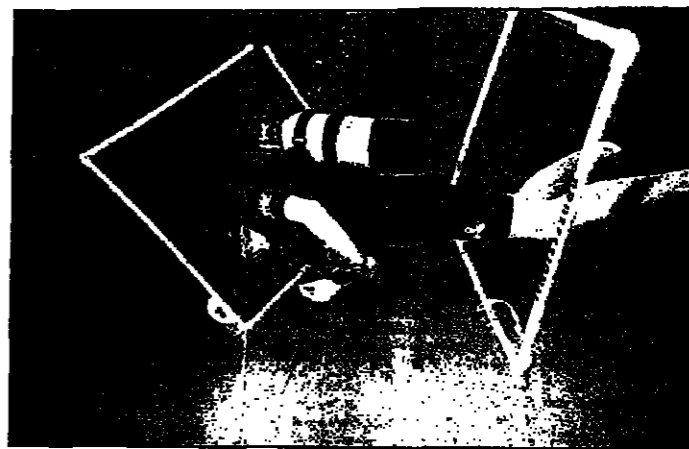
Doing things such as passing through narrow apertures with a tank on your back is something you can have no feel for until you try it. Though you've entered a world in which you can move in every dimension, you're in fact lost some of your spatial senses. You can see forward perfectly, but can barely look round, let alone behind you to check for clearance. It's like driving a transit van without wing mirrors. But the stakes when diving are a lot higher than scraped paintwork, which is why it's all the better to go through a few plastic squares first, developing catfish whiskers before throwing in variables such as current and swell.

The other half of the story is more technical, though it's hardly rocket science; we're talking about buoyancy. In broad terms, too much of it and you bob around on the surface; too little, and you get the concrete socks effect. Somewhere in between is your goal. In practice, when diving with a buoyancy com-

pensator (BC) - a kind of inflatable life-jacket - you're kept afloat to start with by having sufficient air in the BC. Letting some out allows you to sink. Putting just the right amount back in (from your pressurised tank), keeps you suspended, below the surface of the water, neutrally buoyant. Bingo.

The tricky bit is maintaining neutral buoyancy at different depths. Because air is compressible, a given volume in your BC, and lungs will diminish as you descend. As the pressure increases you become correspondingly less buoyant, sinking ever faster. In reverse, just watch your bubbles expand as they rise above you. The effect on an ascending diver, all other things being equal, is exponential: the higher you go, the more the air in your BC expands, which makes you rise faster, which expands the air - and so on. Unfortunately divers who've really lost it come firing out of the water like a Polaris missile, hardly a textbook ascent, which may well be accompanied by the bends or other unmentionable afflictions. It's precisely why good buoyancy control is so critical.

Meanwhile, back at the bottom of the pool, you're going cross-eyed trying to squirm upside-down through a complicated series of squares. The bends is the last thing on your mind and so, ironically, is buoyancy control - it's becoming instinctive, which is just the way it needs to be.

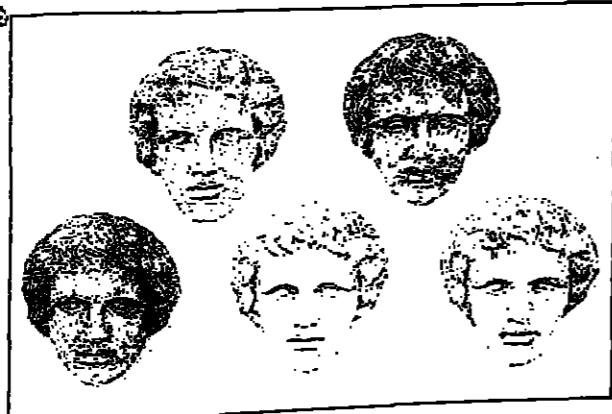


Underwater obstacles: the Diamond Reef system

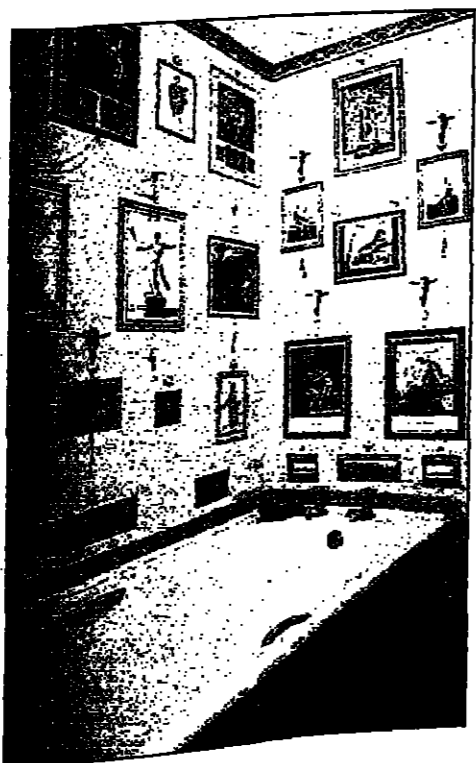
Photographs: Sid Thacker/Ocean Optics

## Just give me a paintbrush and a plant pot, and I'll give you verdigris

You don't have to be an artist, or an expert, to create your own paint finishes, writes Catherine Stebbings. And it's fun



Face-lifts: paint effects are not about covering up old blemishes, but creating an original, highly personal look



Decorating tends to be a passion. You may have tried the minimalist look, played with vibrant acrylic lines and lemons, dabbled in deep greens and regal reds, and ended up slapping on any old thing. You may, on the other hand, always have felt dubious about special effects. The fabulous interiors shown in glossy magazines can be a far cry from all that effort of messing around with paints and polishes, only to find it looks wrong when it's all dried and varnished. To see whether I could rag and drag with the best of them, I took a day course with Paint Magic, just off Portobello Road in north London.

Paint Magic courses are devised by a team of experts led by Jocasta Innes, the maestra of paint effects and author of the phenomenally successful *Paint Magic*. There are many courses to choose from; the company suggested "Basic Paint Effects", an introduction to decorative techniques for walls, woodwork and furniture.

The course was slickly presented by the shop's in-house teacher, Jacqueline Pederson. The day began with a cup of coffee and a slide presentation showing the various effects we would be discussing and practising later in the day.

Gradually Jacqueline introduced us to all the different media, from oil-based products to the more versatile water-based primers, paints and varnishes. Within an hour I was painting a picture frame with its first coat, and dreaming of where

my masterpiece would hang.

Then it was time to try our hand at paint effects: washing, ragging, sponging and dragging. As I pondered over my board of lettuce green, gently stroking the brush across its surface as if it were a precious stone, I realised why paint effects are so appealing. This is not about slapping on paint to covering old blemishes and scars; this is about lovingly tending to your walls, putting your energy and care into creating something original and highly personal. As Jacqueline remarked, "Paint effects need to be subtle, to create a feeling or a mood rather than a clever look."

Throughout the day we were guided from one project to another, following a demonstration, then attempting it ourselves. There was no arduous washing out of brushes and collecting of paints. The mess was conveniently dispersed in a sink behind the screen, and fresh brushes and materials would be laid out for the next project. As a result we achieved a great deal.

My primary trophy was a distressed picture frame - a rather impressive effect created by smothering the undercoat with candle wax, painting over it in top coat and rubbing the dry frame down with wire wool. While the others put the finishing touches to their frames, stencilling on fleurs-de-lis and delicate marine life, I waxed and polished mine for a more rugged look.

While we learnt about both oil- and water-based paint, we

used only the latter, because they dry quickly. As Jacqueline explained, "water-based products are much easier to use, mistakes can be washed off or painted over and drying times are quick - creating special effects is much easier than it used to be."

Courses generally take between six and 10 people, to give time for individual tuition. People's reasons for joining vary from wanting to decorate their own homes, to professional decorators, both men and women, wanting to learn new techniques. Rachel, a researcher in the City, saw it as a pleasant way to spend a Saturday: "It's very therapeutic to do something creative that doesn't require a lot of artistic ability or intellectual input."

Our final artistic venture was a small terracotta pot painted in verdigris, stippled in two shades of green and finished with a fine line of copper-coloured wax. The result looked remarkably like ageing copper. That's one I will definitely do again, to transform all those plastic pots at home.

Perhaps one of the most refreshing aspects of the course was its objectivity. Naturally, we used the in-house products during the day, but Jacqueline gave us a good overview of what is on the market in both specialist and DIY stores. It was also not assumed that we all had dreamy houses; the course was geared towards giving you confidence to go home and do what you wanted.

Can I now earn a fortune decorating the homes of the

rich and famous? Probably not, but I am now confident enough to give my home the sort of face-lift I thought I could never afford.

Paint Magic Courses run throughout the year in shops

around the country. They run for one to five days; prices start at £60 for a full day's tuition, 10am-4.30pm, plus materials. For details, contact Paint Magic, 79 Shepperton Road, London N1 3DF. Courses around the country: London

(0171-792 8012), Richmond (0181-940 9799), Islington (0171-359 4441), Bath (01225 423040), Arundel (01903 883633), Guildford (01483 306072), Marlow (01628 477707), N Ireland (01252 421881).

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**HAYDOCK**  
1.15: **ALBOSAAM**, who ran a good race to finish two-lengths second to the six-year-old Country

to firm ground over 2m 110yds at Sandown last time, figures on a less-than-ideal handicap mark and will have no problems with the tiring ground. Manteno, who returns to his own age group after a 10-length finish in the House of Dreams over 2m at Catterick, is another who will not mind the faster surface and could prove the dash.

**1.4: NAYSAYER** was a neck runner-up to prolific winner Anabranch, with third left trailing 12 lengths behind, over 2m 3f 110yds at Doncaster last time out, has conditions to suit today and should go well. **Moonale Forte** is the problem, but might prefer softer ground.

□□□

**2.15: BELLATOR**, who according to a popular school of thought, had been laid out all season for the Tote Gold Trophy at Newbury last time, failed to do the business in that race but still looked short of peak fitness beforehand and may quite well to finish 2nd or 4th-lengths seventh to eighth.

His trainer reckons he needs soft ground to be seen at his best but all his useful form last season was on a resiliant surface and he should cope better than most here. **Red Blazer** is the clear pick.

□□□

**3.25: SHAHRUR** showed an impressive turn of foot in winning the Lazzarato Hurdle over this course and distance and followed up on much quicker ground at Fontwell on Monday. He has a best form in the race but, if he fails to show his best on this fast surface, **Circus Star** may be the one to profit.

□□□

**3.05: STORMY PASSAGE** is improving fast and more reliable than **Green Green Desert** who will like the conditions.

□□□

**3.35: SIR TALBOT** handled fast ground on the Flat and can restore a reputation denied by Triumph Hurdle second favourite City Hall. **Real Estate** is the threat.

□□□

**4.05: CHALLENGER DU LUC**

been on Soft ground and he could start a false price.

□□□

**2.45: COURT MELODY**, a progressive staying chaser, was impressive when beating **Destin D'Estroval** by seven lengths in the 3m11 **Loyds Ayle Diamond Handicap** at Sandown in early February and improved again two weeks ago when beating **McGregor The Third** by five lengths off a 6lb higher mark at Newbury over

□□□

**4.40: This is the right time** and the year for **BIMSEY**, who has the improving **Gysart** and rehabilitated **Backhouse Boy** to beat.

□□□

**Greenalls National Trial - 10-year-olds**

	1988	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97
<b>Fees of the favourites:</b>	1	4	4	1	3	3	1/2	3	5	5

[illegible]

First show				
Haydock - 1.15				
Horse	H	L	T	
Yorn Silk	9-2	5-1	9-2	
Altheaus	11-2	5-1	5-1	
Court Tony	11-2	5-1	6-1	
Kilbride Lad	9-1	9-1	9-1	
Martello	9-1	8-1	9-1	
Sat Mid Bnd	10-1	5-1	3-1	
Sharp Temper	9-1	11-1	10-1	
Barnburgh Boy	10-1	11-1	12-1	
Supercat	11-1	12-1	12-1	
Dogged Inland	16-1	7-1	16-1	

Haydock - 2.45				
Horse	C	H	L	T
Call it A Day	6-1	12-2	6-1	6-1
Oven Boils	8-1	13-2	6-1	11-2
Strain Royal	6-1	13-2	6-1	13-2
Kim Of Peaboe	7-1	13-2	6-1	7-1
Court Melody	9-1	3-1	11-1	9-1
Don Samcoast	10-1	11-1	12-1	10-1
Earth Summit	12-1	7-1	10-1	7-1
Belmont King	14-1	12-1	12-1	14-1
Nashorn Lad	14-1	14-1	2-1	12-1
Nashorn In Chief	14-1	16-1	14-1	16-1
Comet's Cavalier	2-1	5-1	2-1	2-1

Kingsford Impinger	12-1	14-1	14-1
Midnight Model	5-1	14-1	14-1
Pinkie Minimal	25-1	20-1	20-1
Cable	150-1	150-1	150-1

Each-way a quarter the odds; places, 1, 2, 3

Horse	C	H	L	T
Moonraker Force	2-1	11-4	11-4	9-4
Even Flow	3-1	7-4	11-4	11-4
Polymath	4-1	7-2	7-2	6-1
Flying Instructor	11-2	11-2	11-2	11-2
Clay Man	8-1	5-2	6-1	7-1
Kilnrat	12-1	14-1	16-1	16-1
Isaac	16-1	2-1	4-1	12-1

Each-way a quarter the odds; places, 1, 2

C - Conal H - William HB L - Ladbrokes T - Tot

Horse	C	H	L	T
Challenger Du Lac	5-2	5-2	9-4	9-4
Super Pacifica	3-1	3-1	11-4	3-1
Callaway Joe	5-1	5-1	9-1	9-2
Jobber The Ribber	4-1	4-1	9-2	9-2
Lands Aid	5-1	9-2	9-2	5-1
Amtrak Express	16-1	16-1	16-1	16-1
Empire Mill Prince	20-1	20-1	20-1	20-1

Call it A Day

Each-way a quarter the odds; places, 1, 2

[illegible][illegible]

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<b>KEMPTON</b>	971	981
<b>HAYDOCK</b>	972	982
<b>MUSSELLBURGH</b>	973	983
<b>LINGFIELD</b>	974	984

**ALL COURSES RESULTS**  
**0891 261 970**  
*Call and 30p per minute. 11.5p. 1st. 10p. 1st. 10p. 1st. 10p.*

**2.45: 1. KNIGHTSBRIDGE SCOT (N)**  
 Williamson 6-5 fav, 2. Bessley 8-9  
 N. Gault, Dunlop 16-17 ran, 3. 24 (Miss V.  
 Williams, Harford), Toller 22/20, 4 (Miss V.  
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# Strath Royal to stop the Nicholls roll

Ramsden, like several of those said to make a living from

Photograph: Phil Smith

That he is clever and self-confident will not have escaped members of the jury this past month. What did escape them,

In 1996 Jack marked our cards about Master Charter, who on his reappearance duly won a 20-runner handicap at 6-1 before going on to win at Pontefract and Newmarket, and Sujud, who won over hurdles. Last year he put us on to Epic Stand, whose subsequent three victories included one at 10-1 in a 25-runner handicap, and Fame Again, who won at

"You chaps [the media] keep feeding them [the public] these lines, and there are innuendos in the papers about a lot of our runners," Jack said after Thursday's adjudication.

The people in the jury box, however, begged to differ. Jack and Lynda Ramsden will now go about their work once again, and it would be churlish to say their presence is not a fascinating element of the British turf. For how long it will continue is open to debate.

The documentation shows

The Ramsdens have great contacts in South Africa, a holiday destination before the trial started almost four weeks ago. If they feel a sense of persecution continues following the High Court trial it would not be astounding to see their caravan following the route of the Voortrekkers. Some would miss Jack Ramsden. Others might have a different attitude.

The worry about Dun Belle, however, is her ability to handle today's sound surface, and Fahy admits that bottomless going, similar to that when he won the same race three years ago with Nuaffe, would assist her cause considerably. There must also be a question mark against Him Of Praise, who threw away a valuable race at Uttoxeter last time, and Earth Summit, who did not reproduce his Welsh National-winning form last time out.

**RICHARD EDMONDSON**  
**NAP: My Shenandoah**  
 (Musselburgh 4.30)  
**NB: Dun Belle**  
 (Haydock 2.45)

The juvenile hurdle is also difficult with any amount of improvement possible in most of the runners, but the equivalent event at Haydock, the Victor Ludorum Hurdle, may fall to **Turn Silk** (next best 1.15), a former runner-up in the Irish Cesarewitch. **Bellator** (2.15) also deserves one more chance to confirm the good impression he made in the William Hill Handicap Hurdle back in December.

Timmy Murphy, rider of Cheltenham Gold Cup favourite *See More Business*, received a six-day ban at Kempton yesterday – but will be back to partner Paul Nicholls's gelding in the Festival highlight on 19 March. Murphy was found guilty of irresponsible riding on *Runaway Pete* and suspended from 9 to 14 March. Had the suspension been for a whip offence, Murphy would have missed the Gold Cup.

Him Of Praise can  
raise the roof

**The former National Hunt jockey Steve Smith Eccles (right) gives a runner-by runner analysis of today's Greenalls Grand National Trial Chase.**

to Ottawa in the Singer & Friedlander National Trial at Uttoxeter. He will probably go to post as favourite and is the one they have to beat.

**Dna Belle:** Runner-up to Dorans Pride in the Hennessy Gold Cup at Leopardstown. A repeat performance would put him in the frame.

**Court Melody:** His trainer, Paul Nicholls, is on fire and so is this horse, winning his last two starts. Likes fast ground and is sure to run well.

**Antomim:** Now trained in Ireland, but has not sparkled this season.

**Him Of Praise:** Seemed to idle in front on his last outing but should run a big race with the first-time visitor in place. Well handicapped and the mount of the Irish champion jockey, Charlie Swan.

**Into The Red:** A great old campaigner who is having his first run of the year. He will probably need it, too.


**Shannagarry:** Useful on his day but inconsistent.

**Colonel In Chief:** Badly hampered and pulled up on his latest start. That run is best ignored and he could be in the firing line.

**Dom Samourat:** Second to Ottowa in the John Hughes Chase last Saturday. Looks a hard ride and his jockey will certainly earn his corn.

**Kendal Cavalier:** Although in good form, winning his last two races, he is over a stone out of the handicap.

**Conclusion:** Four horses should dominate this, including Call It A Day, who is the one they must beat. HIM Of Praise, who was just behind him at Uttoxeter, should fare better in the headgear, while Strath Royal does not know how to run a bad race. The Irish raider Dun Belle comes into the reckoning, but I expect HIM OF PRAISE to show them all a clean pair of hooves.



**GREG WOOD**  
THE A-Z  
OF BETTING

## X is for . . .

x: The symbol in a *Timeform* black book which denotes a poor jumper. They are very fond of symbols up in Halifax, the most famous of them being the *Timeform* squiggle, a strange little hieroglyph which indicates that a horse is deficient in the bravery department. One step beyond that is the double squiggle, meaning that the animal in question is, in *Timeform's* wonderfully florid phrase, "an arrant rogue or a thorough jade." If the horse was human, it would probably sue, but the good judges in Yorkshire do not dish out double squiggles lightly, and it is a rare horse that man-ees to prove them wrong.

**Xenophobia:** A nasty word for a very nasty habit, but one

which British punters say at least be starting to kick. Throughout much of the history of gambling in Britain, it has been taken as read in most betting circles that anyone whose mother tongue is not English (and for the purposes of prejudice, that includes the Americans) is a hopeless, untrustworthy incompetent. The most obvious targets for bigotry have always been the French. In the late 1970s and 1980s, admittedly, Freddie Head did little to uphold the good name of French horsemanship on his annual trip to Epsom to ride a well-fancied horse in the Derby. There was, for instance, the unfortunate moment on Lyphard when he seemed to forget that the

British drive on the opposite side of the road, and when the rest of the runners turned left at the bottom of the hill Freddie went right. In the last season or two, however, a French jockey has emerged who has claims to be the finest on the planet, in the shape of Olivier Peslier. British punters now latch on to Olivier without a second thought, and he has rewarded their faith – at generous odds, too – on any number of occasions. The great irony in all this, of course, is that there has not been an English champion jockey on the Flat since Lester Piggott in 1982.

**Xaar:** Who has yet to contest a Classic but already has a very special place in the heart of

any journalist compiling a weekly feature with an A-to-Z theme. To date, no horse whose name begins with X has won a British Classic, while all of the remaining 25 letters in the alphabet can offer at least one. The Z was the most recent one to join the club, when Zafonic won the 2,000 Guineas, and of course Zafonic is - spooky, this - the sire of Xaar. André Fabre's colt is painfully short in the ante-post market, but no-one could argue with his brilliant success. In the Dewhurst Stakes last October, a performance which was every bit as impressive as his father's in the same race in 1993. As far as long-range betting on the Guineas goes, it is difficult not to think that X marks the spot.

**X-Files:** All those weird and utterly inexplicable events down the years, almost all of which — eerier and eerier — seem to result in bookmakers getting richer. Most famous of all is probably Devon Loch's decision to do the splits with the 1956 Grand National at his mercy, when every loyal subject in the country (and there were actually quite a few of them in those days) had their cash on the Queen Mum's runner. While the famous Royal colours floundered near the furlong pole, ESB galloped past to snatch a miraculous victory. The truth is out there — and it seems to be that the patron saint of bookies is a mean old bruiser who can eat the patron saint of painters for breakfast.

[illegible]

## On occasions I have attended outdoor events without a scarf



MIKE  
ROWBOTTOM  
ON TRAGEDY  
AND SPORT

RISK-TAKING—hey, it's all part of a sports journalist's life.

I couldn't number the times, for instance, that I have hesitated over a curled-up egg or tuna sandwich at post-match buffets, calculating potential risks involved—indigestion, perhaps even a touch of food poisoning.

More often that not, it was a risk I was prepared to take.

On other occasions, I have attended outdoor events without wearing a scarf. Believe me, when the wind turns chilly, that can feel like a risk too far.

But I suppose, in a funny kind of way, one becomes almost blasé about such hazards. They go with the territory.

That territory, remember, is a land where tragedy is an own goal and 5-0 is a massacre.

In such a context, the whiff

—however faint—of real peril tends to concentrate the mind wonderfully. War reporters are the ones who are supposed to deal with the real stuff, not us.

When the bomb went off at the Atlanta Olympics 18 months ago, there was more than one Gulf War veteran in the nearby press centre who first dismissed it as no more than an amplifier blowing in one of Centennial Park's many marquees.

Wrong. Two dead, 111 injured.

Like many thousands of others, I had wandered through Centennial Park earlier that night. When the explosion occurred, I was in bed.

It would be good to report that at that exact moment I sat bolt upright, preternaturally aroused by something I couldn't

explain but couldn't ignore. In fact, it was not until four in the morning that I was roused by a phone call from home. Blundering out of the campus, I passed a group of 15 or so journalists watching CNN television reports of the international incident which had occurred in its own back yard.

The news angle was being very thoroughly covered. The only useful thing to do was to try and talk to shocked, or perhaps merely inconvenienced, bystanders.

Having reached the press centre by circumventing a few road blocks, I went up to the restaurant which directly overlooked the site of the explosion. By the dawn light, the black-tracksuited men of the Federal Bureau of Investigation were

marking out the spread of shrapnel with little flags.

A strange and, yes, frightening sight. The kind of sight that made you think the world might actually be a worrying, threatening, unpredictable place.

That thought returned to me last Saturday morning, while I was at the winter Olympics in Japan. Once again, dynamicaly, I was in bed. Asleep. And dreaming that someone was sitting on my bed, shaking, shaking, shaking it for no sensible reason.

Half-awake, I wondered if the intensely apologetic cleaning ladies who regularly woke me up to dust my television, reorientate my paper bin and change my sheets had become exasperated by my torpor and taken matters into their own hands.

Nope. No cleaning ladies. I got up, feeling more than usually alert and ready for the day. But something still troubled me. Feeling faintly ridiculous, I stared hard at the legs of my bed. Steady as a rock.

A quick mental inventory of the previous night's drinks revealed nothing extraordinary.

Looking up, I noticed the lampshade swinging vigorously from side to side, the little string which led from its centre tapping against the sides.

Perhaps, I thought, someone had left a door open. Although mine was shut... Oh, well.

It was only when I went to the central press canteen that the correct explanation presented itself. "Did you feel the shake?" I was asked. "They're saying it was 5.0 on the Richter Scale."

A colleague based in Tokyo added that he had leapt out of bed when the earthquake began and got under the door frame—a location which apparently offers maximum protection in the event of a building collapsing around one.

I tried to comfort myself with this thought, but—obscurely—it made things worse.

Back in my seventh floor room, having given the structure of my doorway a thorough scrutiny, my eye was caught by the strident warnings concerning the abuse of furniture which I had read with such amusement upon my arrival.

It struck me as odd that I should have been informed of the potential danger of situating my table less than 10 centimetres from the wall—thus en-

couraging the growth of moulds and bacteria—but not told about safety procedure in the by no means unlikely event of an earthquake.

But then I thought—would that have helped? What could I have done anyway—remembered to say my prayers every night?

Ten years ago, covering a Northern Ireland football match, I was booked in to stay overnight at the Europa Hotel in Belfast.

The match ended in a draw; the occasion passed off without incident or alarm. Only after I got back did I hear that the Europa had been bombed 16 times.

Still long odds, admittedly. But sometimes it is better not to know.

## Pressure mounts on Keast and Kingston

Rugby Union  
By Chris Hewett

BOB DWYER and Brian Ashton may not be unduly busy just at the moment but their august and authoritative presence on the periphery of the English game is causing any amount of discomfort in Premiership coaching circles. Neither Andy Keast nor John Kingston, who occupy the hot seats at Harlequins and Richmond, have yet attracted a dreaded vote of confidence from their respective chairmen, but both men are in urgent need of a high-profile victory or three.

Dwyer and Ashton joined the ranks of the unemployed during an outbreak of musical chairs over the last fortnight; the ever-insular Leicester board sacked their Australian maestro 12 days ago after a flurry of cloak-and-dagger activity while Ireland bade farewell to their increasingly frustrated former Bath coach on Tuesday. Significantly, both men have indicated their interest in taking on new roles at Premiership level.

Kingston's polyglot blend of exiled Welshmen and southern hemisphere exotics have home advantage against Saracens in this afternoon's Tetley's Bitter Cup quarter-final and the word on the London street suggests that a heavy Sarries win might lead to all sorts of ramifications at the Athletic Ground. Richmond have already lost twice to their title-chasing big city rivals this season and even though Philippe Sella, the great French centre, misses the game with concussion, the visitors can minimise the disruption by moving Ryan Constable to midfield and recalling the in-form Richard Wallace on the left wing.

Harlequins, meanwhile, visit a Bath side struggling to overcome a calamitous injury list that has deprived them of their entire Heineken Cup-winning back row. On paper, Quins have a perfect opportunity to record a first-ever league victory at the Recreation Ground—something that would ease Keast's anxiety and spike the theory that Zinzan Brooke's imminent arrival from New Zealand has more to do with job-hunting than house-hunting.

However, the Londoners must again make do without Thierry Lacroix, the French stand-off—Rob Liley gets another outing in the linchpin position—and despite Chris

Sheasby's return to the back row following his "reverse transfer" from Wasps, Bath are running so hot at the moment that another defeat, their sixth in seven outings since the late autumn, is an ominous possibility. If it happens, Keast will have presided over the worst run of league results in Harlequin history.

There is no such neurotic nail-biting at either Northampton or Newcastle, who meet this afternoon in what promises to be the most thunderous Cup quarter-final for some time. Both Ian McGeechan and Rob Andrew have their sides in tip-top condition and the contest is so lavishly garnished with interpersonal conflicts—Tim Rodber against Dean Ryan at No 8, Matt Dawson against Gary Armstrong at scrum-half, Paul Grayson against Andrew at stand-off, Gregor Townsend against Alan Tait at centre—that a Franklins Gardens full house is guaranteed.

Newcastle have yet to lose to an English side this season, but the Saints came as close as any to turning them over three weeks ago before going down 21-17. However, that game left a lasting impression on Ryan, the Newcastle captain, and in his forthright fashion, he will demand a massive physical effort from his side this afternoon.

"We won't be found wanting," he promised yesterday. "The last game was pretty intense and it was played at as high a level as you ever encounter in the club game. But Cup ties have a habit of lifting the intensity still further." With Rodber, the Northampton skipper, confirming that his side had trained in a particularly physical fashion this week, the stage is set for a red-hot fight to the finish.

The on-going argument between the professional clubs and the Rugby Football Union over the make-up of next season's Premiership is not so much red raw as mind-numbingly soporific, but it rumbled on just the same yesterday. No sooner had the English Rugby Partnership confirmed its intention to expand both divisions to 14 teams from August than Cliff Brittle, chairman of the RFU management board, "categorically refuted" any suggestion that a final decision had been made.

"Any valid decision to increase the number of clubs must be considered and agreed by the RFU," said Brittle. "ERP's statement is inaccurate and misleading." When, oh when, will it ever end



Mike Brewer pruned three-quarters of West Hartlepool's squad on arrival at Brierton Lane. "Everything has been geared towards promotion," he says

Photograph: Peter Jay

## Brewer brewing up a storm way out West

Chris Hewett meets the disciplinarian former All Black who is installing some southern hemisphere mettle into the fallen pride of the North-east, today's Cup rivals for Sale

TO almost any other figure in world rugby, the task of restoring West Hartlepool's top-drawer status might have seemed more trouble than it was worth; the sporting equivalent, perhaps, of convincing potential advertisers that Channel 5 really exists, or talking Saddam Hussein into joining Amnesty International. You get the impression, though, that Mike Brewer could sell arrows to Sitting Bull and communism to Ronald Reagan. An impressive figure? Hell, yes.

He enjoys a challenge, too. Any man with sufficient front to walk out on an All Black World Cup party, square up to New Zealand rugby's "Auckland Mafia" at the height of its power and tell Dr Louis Luyt, of South Africa to go put a sock in it possesses a certain cachet. Brewer wielded a very big stick during his playing days south of the equator and now he has his size 12s under the table in the Allied Dunbar Premiership, he is beginning to wield it here.

Eight months ago, West were dead in the water; relegated from the top flight last season after losing 19 of their 22 league encounters, they were bruised, battered, braced off and stony broke. The sight of their nearest neighbours, Newcastle, luxuriating in the opulent

surroundings of Sir John Hall's bank account did little to lighten the Brierton Lane gloom. The demons let loose by professionalisation had claimed another victim.

Enter Brewer, who had been working with the Irish national team while pursuing a proper career as a marketing manager with Canterbury, the New Zealand-based clothing and sportswear giant. Within weeks, he had presided over a root-and-branch restructuring of the club along cut-throat professional and commercial lines, installing two fellow directors to look after sales and finance and himself as a general manager-type figure with responsibility for all things rugby and a decisive input into just about everything else.

"Then," he recalls, "it was time to look at the players. I not only had to identify who was up to it and who wasn't, but I also had to work out who might be capable of competing effectively amongst the big boys in Premiership One. I have to confess that I made most of my judgements on the basis of video evidence, which was far from ideal, but I saw enough to

implement a cut of around 75 per cent on the first-team squad."

Just the 75 per cent? Was "Bruiser", as Brewer is known back home in the south island, getting soft in his old age? Not likely. His extensive contacts in the southern hemisphere bore immediate fruit as he lured the Western Samoan scrum-half, Tu Nu'uall'i'a, and the former Auckland stand-off, Steven Vile, to the North-east. Others have followed—Mark Giachieri, the Italian Test lock, and Philippe Farnier, a French second row with Super 12 experience—and with the coach himself now starting to play again at 33, West have a formidable look about them.

So formidable, indeed, that they are unbeaten at home since August, despite having only nine full-time professionals on their playing staff, none of them earning what Brewer dismisses as "daft money". It is a transformation that has taken them to third in Premiership Two, a point adrift of London Scottish but with a game in hand and a far more sympathetic run-in. More to the immediate point, it has put them in the last

eight of the Tetley's Bitter Cup. This afternoon, they host Sale in an encounter that brings another former All Black No 8, John Mitchell, glowering across the Pennines.

"We go back a fair way, John and I, and we're good mates," Brewer said. "We played against each other regularly when he was with Waikato and I was with Otago. It'll be a lot of fun seeing him today, especially as no one at West regards this as a win-at-all-costs sort of occasion. Everything has been geared towards promotion, so the Cup is a nice little extra, a chance for our players to go out there against a top side and give it a real lash without worrying about the ramifications of it all."

Oh, yeah? Never trust an All Black who claims not to care about the result of a rugby match. Especially one as ferociously competitive and strong-willed as Brewer, who first came to England in 1986 with a New Zealand Universities side boasting Sean Fitzpatrick and David Kirk before returning a year later with what quickly emerged as a seminal NZ Barbarians outfit.

"Yep, that was some team. I was playing open-side flanker, with Michael Jones at No 8 and Alan Whetton at blind-side. In essence, it was the backbone of the side who would go on to win the first World Cup later that year. Unfortunately from my point of view, I didn't make it to the tournament. I'd taken a kick in the back in France in '86 and although no one realised it at the time, the force of it split my pelvis. The pain grew steadily worse, and cost me my chance."

"My withdrawal from the 1991 World Cup squad was very different. I'd been struggling with a foot problem that was just coming right in time for the tournament but a couple of days before we were due to fly to England, I was ordered to prove my fitness by jumping on and off a stool without any strapping. I said: 'Look, I'd be strapped for a game, so why can't I be strapped for this?' The coaches wouldn't budge, so I walked out and resumed playing for Otago. We won the National Provincial Championship that year."

Injury continued to plague Brewer—a torn calf muscle cost him the All Black captaincy in

1992—so it was no great surprise that on arrival at Brierton Lane, he made a monumental virtue of his obsession with physical conditioning. "We do anything up to 30 sprints of 100 metres plus in a single session and while some of the other English coaches laugh at me for insisting on so much running, I'd say we're the fittest side in our division by a distance."

"What is rugby about at its most basic? It's about running and aerobic endurance. I remember Jim Blair [the Auckland coach now in charge of fitness at Bath] once saying that you didn't need to run to get fit for rugby. We had a huge argument about that. Running is absolutely fundamental to this game."

So, too, is tactical awareness, man management and motivational expertise. Brewer is on top of them all, hence the recent approaches from his former provinces, Otago and Canterbury. He will almost certainly return, perhaps to challenge for the silver fern succession. "That, though, is in the medium to long term," he insists. "At the moment, I'm happy running an English club on a day-by-day basis."

By the time he finishes, the All Blackification of a reinvigorated rugby backwater will be complete.

## Castleford may test tactical options which Edwards has brought to Bulls

Rugby League  
By Dave Hadfield

BRADFORD BULLS have made fewer changes in personnel than any club over the winter, but today's Silk Cut Challenge Cup tie at Castleford is the first serious opportunity to assess one significant addition. Bradford were so dominant

last season that it hardly mattered that they knew only one way to play. When Plan A works as well as it did—at least against domestic opposition—there is not much call for Plan B.

The recruitment of a master craftsman like Shaun Edwards gives them a series of alternative strategies stretching deep into the alphabet—and Castleford show signs of becoming op-

position against whom sheer power might not be enough.

Edwards' arrival—and the appointment of Graeme Bradley as captain—frees the mercurial Robbie Paul from other responsibilities and will make the New Zealander all the more dangerous.

The beaten finalists for the last two years will be wary of Cas, especially after the way

they hung in to beat Leeds in injury time in the last round.

The Castleford coach, Stuart Raper, recalls his hooker, Richard Russell, in place of Danny Orr and may give a debut to Danny Ellison, the winger signed from Wigan.

At The Stoop the front-row confrontation between London Broncos' Mark Carroll and Grant Young on one side

and Halifax's Karl Harrison and Kelvin Skerrett on the other rather gives the lie to the contention that modern rugby league is a game in which props are all converted second rows.

The tie will be the first test of Broncos' jibes about "Northern softies" and their boast that they will out-muscle the opposition this season. Certainly, in Carroll

and Young they have the most physically imposing front row in Britain—and Carroll has a particular reason for wanting to go to Wembley. On his last visit there, as a member of Australia's World Cup-winning side in 1995, he hid a pair of his custom-made, size 15 boots in the stadium, with the intention of reclaiming them on the day of the Cup final.

St Helens have also left their mark on Wembley over the last two years, but will find Warrington a sterner proposition than of late in this afternoon's televised match.

Australian brothers will be in opposition at Widnes, with their prop forward, Kyle White, facing the Salford scrum-half, Josh. That is one of a number of ties in which Super League

sides should be too strong for their opponents. Hull and Sheffield face the amateurs of Ebbw Vale and Ebbw Vale and it is difficult to imagine Wigan being any more extended at Dewsbury, even though they will be without Henry Paul. The New Zealander has a calf injury and will be replaced by Tony Smith, with Craig Murdoch taking over at scrum-half.

SPORT  
ON TV

especially given that officials have to give the benefit of any doubt to the attacker. A couple of years ago he would have been offside. But that was then and this is now. What's the point of having all this technology if you're incapable of interpreting the information it gives you?

"I am really happy I made the decision to play in these tournaments," he said "rather than in America. They have had

here in '94, joined the discussion about whether Els or Tiger Woods will prove the stronger performer in the long run and

has great control of the flight of his ball, whereas Tiger can struggle sometimes in the wind."

68 69; A Oldcorn 71 68; S Allen (Aus) 57 70;  
Woomera 68 58; 138 T Siroi (Tha) 68 70;  
Cabrera (Arg) 70 68; L Westwood 69 66; G Eas-  
(GB) 72 68; A Hunter 69 69; J Coceres (Ar-  
71 67; 139 M A Martin (Sp) 68 71; A Forstner  
(Swe) 69 70; A Wall 71 68; P Price 68 71;  
Romero (Arg) 72 67; C Montemarle 70 69;  
Raker 69 71; B Muntz (Neth) 69 70

Queensland. Davies had seven-under par second round to lie eight shots off the leader America's Cindy Schreyer.

the slower and a great many fish have been caught. Here I started to get a little excited at the thought of catching

to re-cast, it was necessary to draw the line up slowly. It was by doing this that I got a few bites, but nothing that came

1

line, reel it in and do it again. With thanks to GNER.

**The salmon still has the jump on the fisherman despite the modern array of rods and flies**

**Calls to 0891 numbers cost 50p**

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**TENNANTS VILVET GUP** Fifth round: Currie v Gyle; East Kilbride v Hawick; Edinburgh Acadia v Waterloona; Harlow FP v Stirling County; Jed-Forest v Glasgow Hawks; Keith v West of Scotland; Kilmarnock v Melrose; Kirkcaldy v Boroughmuik.

**WOMEN'S NORTH First Division:** Leyland Motors v York; Sheffield v Chester; Walsall v Blackburn; Wyringway Park v Liverpool Sefton.

**WOMEN'S WEST Premier:** Bourne-mouth v Exmouth; Exeter v Cheltenham; Leominster v Colwall; Redland v Tisbury Vale; Yeas v St Austell.

**BOWLS:** English Women's Indoor National Championships (Yarmouth).  
**SNOOKER:** Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (Derby).  
**SQUASH:** Super Series final (Hatfield).  
**TENNIS:** Guardian Direct Cup (Barnes Park, London).

**The salmon still has the**  
**despite the modern arra**

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# Sluggish Wariso makes fast exit

## Athletics

Simon Turnbull  
reports from Valencia

ON TOP of the world rankings coming into the European Indoor Championships, Solomon Wariso crashed to terra firma with a premature bump yesterday. The sprinter with the Superman tattoo on his left arm was unable to fly round the track in the Luis Puig Sports Palace.

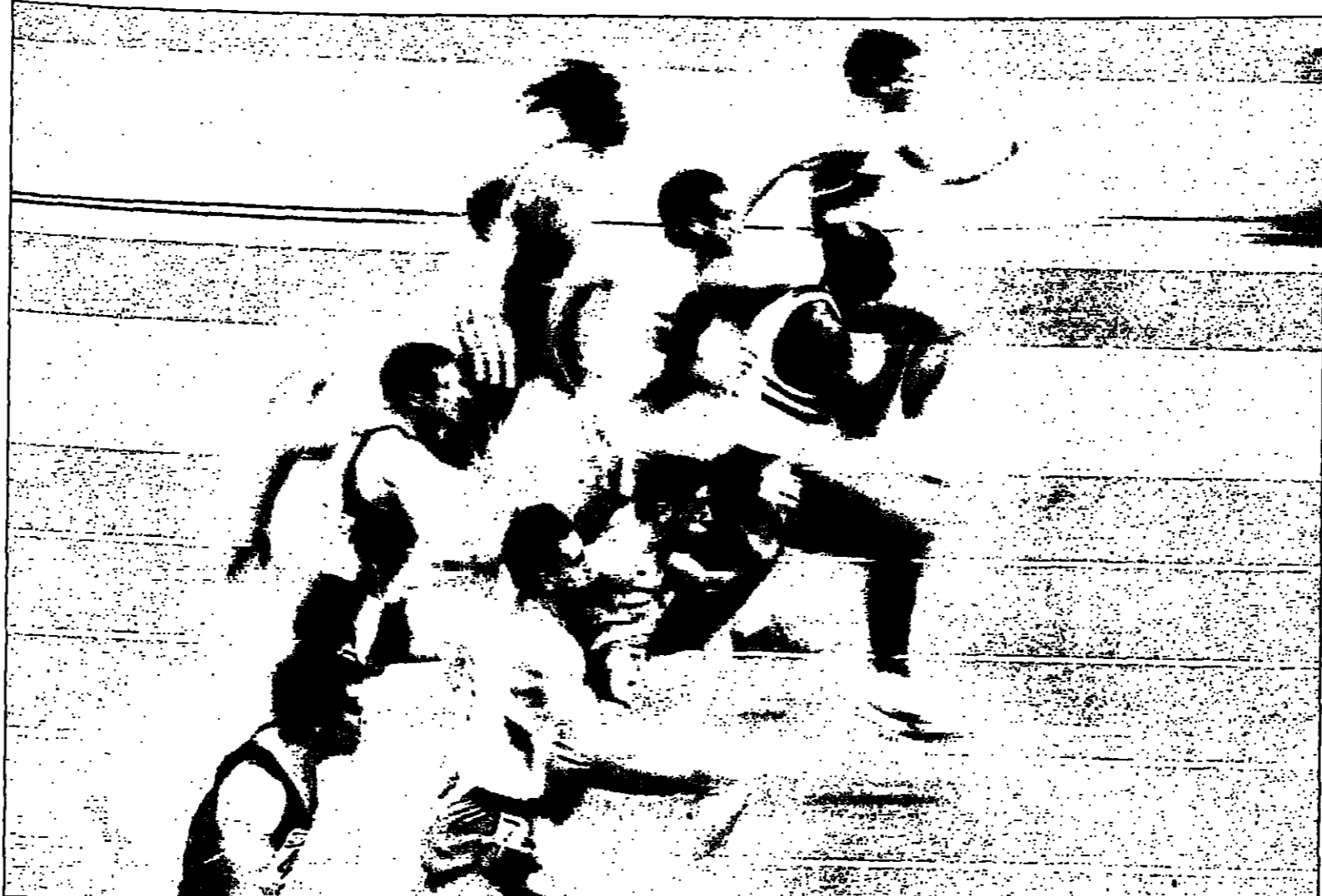
Britain's golden shot for the 400 metres title was a mere Clark Kent when he pulled on his spikes for the heats. He finished third and failed to qualify for the semi-finals.

"Perhaps I should get it lazied off and put The Joker on instead," he said, pointing to his physical artwork. "Maybe someone put kryptonite in my food this morning."

PAUL EDWARDS may become the first British athlete to be given a life ban, after allegedly failing a drugs test for the second time in his career. The 39-year-old former Commonwealth shot bronze medalist is alleged to have tested positive for traces of testosterone in an out-of-competition test last June. Edwards, who was suspended for four years in 1994, is likely to be banned for life if he is found to have committed a second offence.

The special powers Wariso summoned on his 400m debut in the AAA Championships certainly deserted him. Off the pace from the gun, he trailed across the line behind Carlos Silva of Portugal and the Pole Tomasz Czubak in 48.81sec - a sluggish shadow of the man who clocked a scorching 45.71sec in Birmingham three weeks ago.

"Get me a gun and a blindfold," the sprinter-cum-freelance writer shouted to Graham Knight, one of the British team coaches, as he left the track and headed for the exit door. "It'll be



Darren Braithwaite (centre) leads his heat of the 60 metres, which he won in 6.67sec in Valencia yesterday

Photograph: Phil Cole/Allsport

so embarrassing going home." Solomon, for all his wisdom, was asking for trouble in making two trans-Atlantic trips in the past fortnight - to train with his coach Innocent Egbunike in Los Angeles last week and then to return to Europe on Tuesday. "I felt really sluggish," he said, "but I'm not going to make any excuses. I wasn't sure I was going to win here but I expected to go home with a medal."

So did Sean Baldock. But now Britain's second-ranked

400m runner will be hoping to return to Sussex with the gold. On form this season, Baldock is the fastest man left in the field. A comfortable winner of his heat in 47.26, the man from Hastings can expect a battle with the Italian Asrat Sabir, an equally impressive qualifier.

Paul Slythe, the third 400m man in the British team, bade his farewell with Wariso. Fourth place in his heat, in 47.62, was not quite good enough to secure a semi-final place.

Nick Buckfield was the other British "casualty" in the opening session of competition, failing to reach the heights he achieved with his fifth place in the pole vault in the World Championships last summer. Two failures at 5.55m left him needing to improve his British indoor record by 4cms to 5.64m to reach the final.

He was unable to rise to the occasion, though clearing 5.55m at the third attempt at least salvaged a season's best for Buck-

field, another Sussex man in the British team.

There were no medals at stake on the triple jump runway, though finishing top of the women's qualifying pile will have done little harm to Ashia Hansen's hopes of striking gold. The Shaftesbury Barnet Harrier has particularly tough competition in her event but she goes into this afternoon's final with the psychological edge of having eclipsed her rivals yesterday. Her second round effort,

14.48m, put her 10cms ahead of the Czech world champion Sarka Kasparikova. Rodica Mateescu, the Romanian who leads the European indoor rankings this season, was the third best qualifier, with 4.12m.

"It's very close between us," Hansen said, "but I'm trying not to think about it too much."

At least the Indiana-born Briton exorcised the ghost of her last European indoor challenge. She failed to register a valid jump in Stockholm two years ago.

# Kafelnikov wins the psychological battle with Henman

## Tennis

John Roberts  
reports from Battersea Park

WITH the wind flapping the plastic roofing and the stanchion joints creaking, it was difficult to be sure whether we were watching a tennis tournament or about to go ballooning with Richard Branson.

On the Centre Court of the temporary arena in Battersea Park, Tim Henman was running short of belief. It would be unfair to suggest that the British No 2 blew his chance of ad-

vancing to today's semi-finals of the inaugural Guardian Direct Cup, although that was the view expressed by his Russian opponent, Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

"Tim should have won, 6-4, 6-4," the third-seeded Kafelnikov said, having triumphed in their quarter-final, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2. The 24-year-old knows all about turning points when Henman is on the other side of the net. At Wimbledon two years ago, Henman saved two match points against Kafelnikov, before winning their first round match in five sets.

Yesterday, with Henman

serving powerfully and almost flawlessly on a fast carpet court, Kafelnikov thought the match was up when the Briton created two break points at 4-4 in the second set. The first opportunity was lost when Henman lofted a backhand over the baseline. Kafelnikov emphatically saved the second with forehand down the line to the corner of the court.

Serving to save the set in the next game, Henman double-faulted to 15-40, and then struck a backhand half-volley long after Kafelnikov returned his next serve. "I was lucky to

break at the end of the second set," the Russian said. "He thought he had the match won already. After that I had the edge over him psychologically."

That belief sustained Kafelnikov during the fifth game of the final set. Leading 3-1, he survived three break points from 0-40, holding for 4-1 after Henman saw another backhand go long.

Kafelnikov sympathised with Henman, who has raised his game this week to end a run of five defeats. "When his first serve goes in, basically I'm not going to break him, the Rus-

sian said. "On the baseline I'm a better player than him, and Tim knows that as well. That's why when he misses his first serve he is under pressure. He's a natural. His main problem is psychological."

Henman, while agreeing that he should have won with one of his chances at 4-4 in the second set, took a positive stance on his week's progress.

With Henman gone, a sense of anticlimax threatens to pervade the tournament over the concluding two days. Many people might consider that the new ATP Tour event has been

low key all week, the notion of tennis in the park in February with Henman and Greg Rusedski failing to pack the stadium.

The chief mistake was to schedule Henman's match against Krajicek so late on Tuesday that it did not finish until past midnight, by which time most spectators had gone home.

Impetus was lost, in addition to which television coverage on the opening days was sporadic. None the less, the organisers are encouraged by the overall response and are determined to make improvements over the next two years.

## Sunergy profits from risk

### Sailing

A DARING piece of navigation by Dutch skipper Roy Heiner paid off when his boat, Brunel Sunergy, secured second place in the fifth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race yesterday.

The yacht completed the 6,670 miles from Auckland to São Sebastião in Brazil, via the Southern Ocean and Cape Horn, more than three days behind Paul Cayard's EF Langue. But this hardly mattered to a crew that had recorded two last places and two next-to-

lasts in the previous four legs.

Amid the noise of an enthusiastic welcome, Heiner spoke of his brave decision to go to the east of the Falkland Islands after rounding Cape Horn, a move which took Brunel Sunergy from sixth to second. "We started looking at going round the Falkland Islands before we got to Cape Horn. We expected one of the other guys to do it but they all followed each other," he said.

"We thought there was a realistic chance of wind all the way through. It was a long way round but the only way to sail that part of the leg."

## Australian test for England

### Hockey

Bill Colwill  
reports from Ipoh, Malaysia

BARRY DANCER, the England coach and Terry Walsh, Australia's chief coach, former team-mates in their national squad, will be in opposite camps as their teams meet in their first match in the Sultan Azlan Shah Six Nations Cup in Ipoh today.

Dancer is under no illusions as to the task he faces. England's last victory against Australia was in Melbourne in 1985 and only last summer, before Dancer took over, England suffered

their worst ever defeat when they lost 10-0 to the Kookaburras at Basingstoke.

Dancer said yesterday: "Malaysia was a useful start but we need to build on our game."

Although disappointed by the shooting in the Malaysia match he felt the abundance of attacking play in the second half was to be commended.

The Australian team is a mix of youth and experience, from Jay Stacy and Stephen Davies with over 200 caps each to three from the Junior World Cup squad which took gold in Milton Keynes last September under Dancer.

## England team in open revolt

### Basketball

By Richard Taylor

ENGLAND'S players ripped the lid off the team's impoverished international programme ahead of tonight's crucial European Championship game against Israel in Manchester, by revealing they were fed up with Pot Noodles and chocolate biscuits before Wednesday's 60-55 win in Belarus.

Now, despite a win which propelled them to third place in their semi-final round group, they are in open revolt. Threatening not to play for the team next season,

a joint statement said: "There is currently no accountability within the corridors of power in English basketball and no respect for national team members."

Snack foods were the only provision made by the English Basketball Association to compensate for substandard food in Belarus.

The coach, Laszlo Nemeth, said: "I am totally committed to the players but have no respect for chief executive Steve Catton and the Association."

Catton responded by saying: "No one wants to be associated with a team who behaves like this."

## Sporting Digest

### Athletics

DONOVAN Bailey, the world 100 metres record holder, has withdrawn from an international meeting in Sydney today because of a badly bruised heel.

### Bowls

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New Zealand: 170 (A Flower 66; S Dool 4-58).

Overseas: 88 for 2.

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0930 563 597

Callers can stop per minute or less.

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# Cricket: Fourth Test England fail at toss and spin

DEPENDING on the gentleness of one's views, England were either hoist by their petard on the first morning at Bourda or stuffed rotten by sod's law.

Having decided quite rightly, to go into this crucial Test match with two spinners, it was imperative that England should win the toss and therefore bowl last when the pitch would be at its most receptive for spin.

After winning the first three tosses of series, this was a tall order for Mike Atherton and after the coin had rolled a fair distance, it came down the wrong way. The agony

## HENRY BLOFELD

play was going to become more difficult as the match went on. But if you are a batsman of Lara's class, ordinary rules do not apply.

Fraser, of all people was driven for three fours but two of these were from half volleys and the third from a lovely stroke from Lara when he hit through the line of a good length ball on off stump. It was a superb stroke and on this pitch only a batsman of Lara's class could have played it.

It was a joy to watch Lara and Chandepaul go for their strokes after lunch. They took the initiative back in the first hour in this series in which the bat has been on top of the ball at both ends. It was glorious cricket.

NOT since the heyday of Lance Gibbs in the 1960s and the magical Indian quartet, Bedi, Chandrasekhar, Prasanna and Venkat, in the 1970s can spin bowling be accurately said to have won a Test match in the West Indies.

Neither team can realistically expect it now especially as the West Indies have no Gibbs and England no Bedi or Prasanna. Nevertheless, both are counting on what they have at their disposal to make an impact on a match likely to decide the series.

Their assessment has been based on a pitch in the middle of a parched, dehydrated outfield that is bound to suck up any water in the vicinity. There has been no significant rain in Georgetown since September and forecasters gloomily predict there will not be any for another three months.

El Niño has not only proved a bother to the rice and sugar farmers but also to groundsmen. Although there was still moisture a foot and a half down when the television crew dug its hole just behind the middle stump for the installation of camera and microphone on Thursday, the surface seems dry and is virtually grassless.

The West Indies team coach, Malcolm Marshall, used the word "flaky" on ex-

Lara dispatched a full toss wide of mid-on for four.

The odd ball kept low and when Lara aimed a violent pull at a shorter ball, it went through at half-stump height and was within a whisker of hitting the off stump. The danger in allowing a bowler to operate unchallenged like this is that once the psychological advantage has been surrendered it is so difficult to get it back.

When play restarted after lunch, Fraser soon found a spot at the Regent Street End where the ball had gone through the surface and it became increasingly



# Troussier avoids a sticky situation

Burkina Faso

THE host nation's defeat in this week's semi-finals of the African Nations' Cup saved Philippe Troussier from an awkward situation in today's final in Ouagadougou.

The much-travelled Frenchman worked wonders to steer Burkina Faso through the first-round group stage - against expectations - and to the last four, where they lost on penalties to Egypt. But his time in charge of the Burkina team is over - next week he begins his new job as the coach of South Africa, who face the Egyptians in the final.

Today's match will Jomo Sono's last in charge of the South Africans. He took over as caretaker coach when Clive Barker, who took the reigning African champions to the World Cup finals, resigned, but he knew his appointment was temporary.

"If God helps me to win the trophy, I just want to take it home," Sono said after his side's semi-final victory over the Democratic Republic of Congo, adding that his aim had been to prove domestic critics, who said that the team would never win anything with a South African-born coach, wrong.

Asked whether he would work with Troussier, he replied: "I will think about it later on."

As for Troussier, known throughout West Africa as the "White Witchdoctor", he was proud of his current team's achievements. "Burkina Faso is a poor country economically but it is very rich in other senses. I am very proud to have taken charge of this team and to have got them to this level," he said.

Burkina Faso's big problem was scoring enough goals - which is not something that should worry Troussier when he takes over as South Africa's coach. Benedict McCarthy may be only 20, but he already has a huge reputation. Now with



FOOTBALL  
AROUND  
THE WORLD  
BY RUPERT  
METCALF

Ajax, he scored four goals in 12 minutes in a first-round match against Namibia plus two in Wednesday's semi-final. Both McCarthy and Egypt's veteran striker, Hossam Hossam, have each hit seven goals in the Nations' Cup so far - two short of the record that Zaire's Mulamba Ndayé set in 1974.

Romania

THE appointment of Victor Piturca as Romania's new national coach has not met with universal approval in Bucharest.

The former Under-21 coach, who will replace Anghel Iordanescu after the World Cup when the latter becomes the coach of Greece, spent two months in jail in 1981 for gambling, which was illegal in Nicolae Ceausescu's Communist state at the time.

One might think that such a record would increase his credibility in the new Romania, but it seems not. "From a moral point of view, Piturca is not the right person," the newspaper *Pro Sport* said. "A public person as the national team trainer has to be 'clean'."

## 'Chairman wanted me to stay' - Little

BRIAN LITTLE was yesterday busy clearing up the circumstances of his surprise departure as manager of Aston Villa on Tuesday. No, he was not pushed; in fact Doug Ellis, the chairman, had pleaded with him not to resign, as he had done on two previous occasions, Little said. This time, however, he could not be turned.

Little visited Ellis at his home on Thursday where the chairman and Villa's secretary-director, Steve Stride, tried to persuade him to change his mind, he said.

"Both he [Ellis] and Steve Stride tried at length to persuade me to stay on Tuesday. I know they did not want me to go," he said. "I have had nothing but support from him."

"But I had made up my mind and I still feel that I made the right decision. The team's performances were being affected in an adverse way such was the speculation about things."

"But I repeat - I have never had anything other than 100 per cent support from the chairman and I am deeply upset that people should think otherwise."

"The chairman forced me out? Nothing could be further

from the truth. I said there had been certain things going on behind the scenes that led to things being difficult for me and it has been suggested that was a direct reference to the chairman."

"But I will say to anyone that that is wrong. Those things were personal and I retain the right to keep them that way. In more than three years together we have not had a problem."

Ellis himself was deadly serious yesterday, contending that he had been hurt by reports that he had forced Little out to replace him with John Gregory.

"It's all terrible lies," Ellis said. "It is hurtful to me to think that people reckon I would damage my relationship with Brian in any way like that."

Little added that Ellis had supported fully his transfer dealings, including the purchases of the strikers Stan Collymore and Savo Milosevic. "The chairman always allowed me to buy who I wanted to buy."

Little added: "There is no secret that we have talked about my position in the past but the chairman did everything he could to talk me out of it - and managed it twice."

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

● People want to try to find a new Pele. They couldn't do that. You don't find another Beethoven, you have only one Michelangelo. In music you have only one Frank Sinatra and in football you have only one Pele. Pele.

● Any player judged a failure in the first team is likely to find himself among the reserves at Preston on a wet Wednesday evening. That includes Stan John Gregory, new Aston Villa manager, on Stan Collymore.

● John Gregory would fine you for not wearing flip-flops in the showers. Dave Carroll, of Wycombe Wanderers, on his former manager.

● I lay awake all night trying

to re-run the 90 minutes in my head. But all I can remember is my goals - and they will be framed forever in my dreams. Scott Jones, Barnsley's two-goal hero, on knocking Manchester United out of the FA Cup.

● It was clearly a case of sour grapes on the part of a few sad characters who must have nothing better to do with their lives. Gordon Strachan, Coventry manager, on being reported for swearing by Southampton fans.

● That bronze medal is worth its weight in gold. Paul Dickenson, BBC commentator, on Britain's Olympic success in the four-man bobsleigh.



Benedict McCarthy (centre), South Africa's 20-year-old prodigy, has taken the African Nations' Cup by storm

Photograph: AFP

## 102 days...

and counting  
until the World Cup  
finals begin in France

CHRIS SUTTON is by no means the only footballer in Europe with an over-inflated ego. The Anderlecht midfielder Enzo Scifo said this week that he would not play international football again after being left out of Belgium's squad for a friendly against the United States.

"The news has deeply disappointed me. I never again want to play under [the Belgium coach Georges] Leekens," the 32-year-old Scifo said. He added that Leekens was showing "a lack of respect".

Scifo, capped 79 times, made his debut for the Belgian national side in 1984 and played in the past three World Cup finals. He has also played for Internazionale, Bordeaux, Auxerre, Torino and Monaco.

Leekens said last weekend that he wanted to experiment in the friendlies against the States on Wednesday, which his side won 2-0, Norway on 25 March and Romania on 22 April. But he added that the players called up for the match against the Americans were not guaranteed a place in his squad for the World Cup finals.

"If Scifo cannot accept that we experiment, that's his problem," Leekens said. "He is choosing the wrong way to express his opinion."

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# Irwin still eager after all these years

'If you don't have desire here you'll soon be on your way', Manchester United's quiet survivor tells Glenn Moore

THURSDAY at The Cliff, Manchester United's training ground, the morning after the FA Cup defeat to Barnsley. At many clubs the first team would have the day off but United's are training, not as a punishment but to ease post-match stiffness - besides, half the first team had not played at Old Trafford.

Behind the metal barriers around 50 fans, undeterred by the raw wind, watch the session, admire the cars and wait for autographs. By the wheelie bin, a local radio reporter interviews Gary Neville, nearby reps from Umbro and Diadora hover.

Alex Ferguson, with an appointment elsewhere, leaves Brian Kidd in charge of shooting practice and heads off. On the way out he slows to ask, partly to be sociable, partly from his desire to know every aspect of United business: "Who are you waiting for?"

"Denis Irwin," I reply. "Oh aye," said the United manager before driving away, no doubt thinking: "That's OK, solid, dependable Denis won't say anything controversial."

And he does not, except for the admission that the manager's rotation policy affects performance, which has been clear to most observers the past six weeks. But the perceptive Irwin can offer, in his soft Irish accent, the insights garnered from nearly eight years at Old Trafford.

Irwin, now 32, was in at the start of United's years of plenty. The manager rates his £650,000 signing from Oldham (Joe Royle, then Oldham manager, addressed Ferguson as "Robber" for months after) on a par with Eric Cantona and Peter Schmeichel for value for money. Only the Dane, Brian McClair and Gary Pallister have played more games under Ferguson.

This morning, at Stamford Bridge, he plays his 370th, with another, even bigger match against Monaco in Monte Carlo on Wednesday.

After so many medals, and enough in the bank to secure his family's future, how does he maintain the hunger? As Brian Little discovered to his cost this season, not every player can.

It is, he said as we sat in the spartan canteen, not so much the winning as the fear of losing that drives United on. "The players will always have the desire here. If you don't you'll soon be on your way. We've had success but we've also had a lot of failures - we've lost two League titles, two League Cups, an FA Cup."

"The feeling you get after the game when you just miss out, like we had at West Ham [when a draw meant Blackburn pipped Manchester United to the 1994/95 title], is not something you want to go through again. As a successful team you are always going to have periods when you miss out. They are not nice but you need them. Last night was a disappointment. We'll miss that trip to



Mr Dependable: 'What helps us in the long run is that every game is like a final no matter who you are playing - even the pre-season friendlies'

Photograph: Peter Jay

Wembley. It is the greatest cup competition in the world and it is still important to us.

"What helps us in the long run is that every game is like a final no matter who you are playing - even the pre-season friendlies. Our club is under so much scrutiny we are always up for it. It is unusual for us to slip up against lesser teams as we have recently. Liverpool seem to lose to smaller clubs and you wonder why because every game is a big game for them as well."

"Some games," he concedes, "are bigger than others. It's more of a six-pointer on Saturday. They've become a top team so there'll be a bit of an edge. You just hope you don't get a 50-50 with Sparty [former team-mate Mark Hughes]. It's always banded around that we have a bad record

against Chelsea but I don't think we have."

Indeed, Chelsea may be unbeaten at Old Trafford in five seasons but United have won four of the last five matches in the capital, including victories by 4-0, 4-1 and 5-3.

Irwin missed the latter win with the knee injury caused by Paul Bosvelt's now infamous "tackle". Apart from his faxed commiseration there has been no further contact from the Dutchman but Irwin appears to regard it as part of the job.

The injury meant Irwin missed the Turin defeat which enabled Juventus to qualify for the last eight and he admits that result may haunt United. First, Monaco have to be dealt with. "It's a tough game. A lot of people say it's a good draw for us but they're going well in quite a tough

league. They look a decent side with a lot of pace up front in [Thierry] Henry and [Victor] Ikpeba. Then there's the big lad [David] Trezeguet and John Collins, who can run and run and has a great left foot. It helps being at home in the second leg."

England expects and Irwin says the same is true within the club. "We have a lot more confidence after qualifying so easily from a tough group and with the extra experience of the young lads. The home win over Juventus was a big game for us; they had turned us over twice last year. Yet last year we had as good a chance of winning as any, we struggled through the League so expectation was low, but we hammered Porto and were very unfortunate to go out to Dortmund in the semi-final. We had a lot of chances in both games."

United approach the tie off-form and with injuries, the latest to succumb being Ryan Giggs. "We've had a dip but not like October last year. We're still creating chances. Rotating the squad makes it more difficult but the manager likes to keep us fresh this time of year. The quality in the squad shows in the way we've coped without Eric [Cantona], Roy [Keane], Maisey [David May], Jordi [Cruyff] and Karel [Poborsky]. But we have missed Roy this last month and Giggsy is a big loss. He gives us pace and creativity and he's been playing as well this year as any."

Keane had been out training, hitting the ball well for an injured player. "He looks good," said Irwin. "He's just started joining in little things."

Irwin came over from Cork seven

years before Keane, going to Leeds where, after 72 League games, he was surprisingly released by Billy Bremner at the age of 20. A useful Gaelic footballer, he contemplated heading back to Ireland but Royle and Oldham rescued him. The memory remains, however, and he makes the point that disappointment has been as much a part of his career as success.

As well as United's near-misses he has only qualified for one of four major tournaments with the Republic of Ireland, the 1994 World Cup, having won the first of 47 caps following Italia '90. Now 32, he said: "Missing out on this year's World Cup was a big disappointment; I probably won't get another chance. It's amazing how age creeps up on you. The years fly by and you get older without even thinking about it."

One bonus is his low public profile. "You have a different way of life as you get older. The young lads take most of the spotlight, the older lads can just get on with life."

For Irwin this primarily means relaxing with his family. "The manager doesn't encourage you to play golf, he feels it can get to your legs. It is a long way around the golf course when you don't play very well. It is drilled into you to relax when you go home, especially at this stage of the season. A lot of people get the idea it's an easy life but there is a lot of mental preparation, especially for Europe."

Aye, that's solid, dependable Denis talking. He may not shift many shirts in the supermarket but the football men at Manchester United know his worth.

## Short-sighted clubs unfit to progress

IT MUST have been galling for Joe Royle to hear the Manchester City fans deriding his players as not fit to wear the shirt at Elm Park on Wednesday night, particularly since "fit" could have been meant in more ways than one. One of Royle's first observations on filling the Maine Road hot seat was that the players were unfit, which makes you wonder about the remit of Frank Clark's fitness coach.

Mind you, "fitness coach" is something of an arbitrary term in English football, since it can refer to anyone from Arnaldo Longaretti, the Italian who Blackburn Rovers players claim has made all the difference to their staying power, to the wily ex-pros who make the lower league lads sweat a bit the morning after the heavy night before.

If you think I'm being flippant, bear in mind roughly 12 per cent of a rugby union club's annual playing budget is allocated to equipment, sports science and medical support, while the same figure at a typical Premiership club is often as low as 0.5 per cent - so just imagine what the clubs in Divisions Two and Three cough up.

In mitigation they can ill afford it, which is not an argu-

ment Premiership clubs can use. And that just makes research published as little as two years ago, which found no discernible difference between the fitness levels of teams from the Premiership, the Third Division and non-League, all the more surprising.

Also, leading football fitness expert Professor Tom Reilly examined data obtained from footballers of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and could hardly tell the difference. This despite the fact that the pace of the game has changed so radically over the last 25 years that "the playmaker who stands on the ball and sprays it everywhere after five pints and a cigar in the pub simply doesn't exist anymore". Who says so? Joe Royle.

It seems short-sighted of clubs that spend millions of pounds on players (who they pay almost as much in a week as the average fitness coach earns in a year) to invest so sparingly in facilities to ensure their prize assets remain in peak condition. Christian Gross is reputed to have laughed when he first clapped eyes on Spurs' gymnasium, while the gym facilities at another top London club are so poor its star players are forced to train at a municipal gym. But at least the Continent



OLIVIA BLAIR  
ON THE FOOTBALLER'S CONDITION

has caused a change in the last few years. Experts like Arsenal's fitness coach, Boro Primorac, who arrived via Grampus Eight and Cannes, have set about conditioning British players to European standards. And they should know. As Mike Walker once said: "You don't see an unfit European side. They're all gaunt and look like athletes."

Of course Walker's side, Norwich, have their very own nutritional expert, aka Britain's favourite foodie Delia Smith, who has apparently convinced the likes of Darren Eadie that three bean and pasta medley is infinitely

preferable to fish and chips if you are an athlete - which professional footballers are supposed to be.

But then dieticians, and even masseurs and reflexologists, are far more commonplace at clubs than full-time fitness experts. It would be wrong to suggest there are no Brits around who could do the job. Chelsea still employ former Olympic sprinter Ade Mafe, brought in by Ruud Gullit to address the "cardiovascular element" of their game (which sounds like another Italian import), while Alan Sugar has allegedly been whispering sweet nothings in the ear of de-cathlete Daley Thompson, currently training the Wimbledon reserves, in the hope of persuading him to fill the role originally created for Swiss fitness expert Fritz Schmidt. Obviously what's good enough for Wimbledon's reserves is good enough for Spurs.

Less well-known is George McNeill, a man who could have surpassed the combined achievements of Thompson and Mafe had he not been so fleet of foot in an era when athletics was bound by the amateur code. McNeill won the New Year Sprint in 1970, then clocked a world record time of 11.14sec over 120 yards. As a professional foot-

baller, however, he was boycotted by athletics, and now puts his skills to good use as fitness coach to Scottish Second Division side Livingston.

It would be unfair, too, to suggest players don't appreciate the importance of fitness: in a survey published last year players agreed it was the key component of training. It's just that old habits die hard; hence the reason why the notion of a faith healer, as vaunted by Glenn Hoddle, has been so cautiously received. Hoddle would no doubt claim physical and mental fitness have a symbiotic relationship, which is true of players like Kenny Dalglish who, according to Bob Paisley, ran the first five yards in his head anyway.

Of course, the team who have lasted the pace the best is Manchester United, whose assistant manager, Brian Kidd, is a fitness expert. Kidd has the best of both worlds. Respected by the players for his achievements in the game, he has meticulously studied training methods at clubs like Ajax, Bayern Munich, Auxerre, Milan and Internazionale and built them into his teachings at The Cliff. It's just one more example of how far ahead of the game Manchester United are, which must make Joe Royle green.

## More than a game, a religion

OUR first chance of a league title in 98 years and I am working in England. Bloody typical. As a supporter for over 30 years I have certainly seen a lot of changes in Cliftonville. As the only team with a Catholic following in Northern Ireland sometimes it has been hard although, to be honest, some of it has been our own fault. But still, a league title. To understand the full significance of this a short history lesson is needed. Cliftonville FC is the oldest football club in Ireland. It is based precariously in North Belfast in the infamous murder mile. Only last month two people were shot, one dead, in the Clifton Tavern, directly opposite our ground, called, would you believe, Solitude. One of life's little ironies that, considering the crowds we used to get in the 1970s.

Now, however, the good times are back. We average about 2,000 per home game and can take up to 1,000 away. The Irish League is split up into a Premier and First Division. The Premier has 10 teams who play each other four times. Of these 10, no less than four, including ourselves, are Belfast teams. So local derbies are common. What makes them different than, say, Manchester United v Manchester City or even Bristol Rovers v Bristol

City is that it is not just local pride that is at stake. Cliftonville are supported by mainly Nationalists; the other three - Linfield, Glentoran and Crusaders - by Unionists. Indeed, Linfield, who own Windsor Park, the home of Northern Ireland, had until recently a clause in their constitution forbidding them to sign Catholics. Crusaders have had a policeman shot while on crowd duty and Glentoran are situated in the Protestant heartland of East

Belfast. When Bill Shankly uttered his famous adage that "football is more important than life" he may have had Northern Ireland in mind. Cliftonville represent Nationalist hopes in the Irish League by dint of the fact that the other two predominantly Catholic supported clubs are no longer in the league. Derry City, who can attract crowds of between 5,000 and 10,000, now play in the League of Ireland. There are rumours that their application

to rejoin the Irish League was scuppered by persons unknown for sectarian reasons. The other club, Belfast Celtic, disbanded in 1956 after a sectarian mob invaded the pitch and attacked the players during a game with Linfield. This incident was replicated in the early 1990s when junior club Donegal Celtic played Linfield in the Irish Cup and players were attacked on the pitch.

That is the nature of following a club here. It is not just football. It is about cultural identity and more, and, if it goes all the way to the wire, our last game of the season is at Portadown. This is the home town of the murdered Loyalist Volunteer Force leader, Billy Wright. Last year our coaches were stoned on the way to the ground and the match abandoned at half-time when our players refused to come out for the second half, fearing for the safety of the crowd. Politics and sport don't mix, eh? Explain that to the followers of clubs here.

But what of our league chances. Four points clear with eight to play. Just imagine, Cliftonville could be in the European Cup. What a dream. And who could we get in the preliminary round... Rangers. Now that is a thought.

FAN'S EYE  
VIEW  
NO 246  
CLIFTONVILLE  
BY  
STEPHEN MAGEE

# Gregory girded for Villa's baptism of ire

JOHN GREGORY probably thought someone was pulling his leg when Doug Ellis rang him up this week - "Of course I'd love to manage Aston Villa. Look, the joke's over, who is this?" - and he could be forgiven for feeling a little disorientated again this afternoon.

This time last week he expected to be plotting Gillingham's downfall in the Second Division. This afternoon, instead, he will be trying to arrest Villa's fall against Liverpool and, with all due respect to the Gills' Adeola Akinbiyi, he is no Michael Owen.

If Gregory feels it is strange he has replaced Brian Little, he is not alone. The Villa fans are wondering, too, why a man who was sacked by Portsmouth and

The pressure is on the Premiership's newest manager today, says Guy Hodgson, while Nick Harris (below) analyses the team news for this weekend's programme

who know how to pass the ball. "Apart from Stan Collymore and Simon Grayson, it is very much the same set of players who were here before I left. They don't have any less ability than they did two seasons ago."

Roy Evans might demur. Two seasons ago his Liverpool side appeared to be heading for great things, disappointment being the only one that has lived up to the bill. Loss again today and even qualification for the Uefa Cup might look difficult but at least the match will be played with knowledge of the result from Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea meet Manchester United at 11.15 this morning and the pack chasing the latter, of which Liverpool are a part, will have torn emotions. If United are to be caught then their defeat is an imperative. On the other hand, if they are going to run away with the title anyway then it would be preferable if Chelsea suffer a reverse.

In contrast there will be unequivocal emotions at the Bridge, where Chelsea will be desperate to avenge last month's 5-3 defeat there in the FA Cup. No time would appear to better than the present because United's squad has the

appearance of being held together with bits of string such as their injury problems. At a pinch, Alex Ferguson might risk players like Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt and Ronny Johnsen but with a European Cup quarter-final in Monaco on Wednesday he will probably think the gamble is too great.

Everton are another team hoping to avenge an FA Cup reverse, although the visit of Newcastle will bring diverse sub-plots with it. Gary Speed, the erstwhile captain at Goodison, is guaranteed a hostile reception while Alan Shearer would like nothing more than

to score his first League goal of the season at the ground where he suffered the ankle injury last July which cost him five months of opportunity.

Blackburn, a club chasing Manchester United, entertain the Fagins of the Leicester who have become experts at picking up a point or two in their travels, having lost away only four times this season. The home side - no wins in five matches - must also overcome the absence of the suspended Kevin Gallacher.

Leeds have absentee problems for their home game against Southampton. David

Wetherall, Alf Inge Haland and Lee Bowyer are suspended. Lucas Radebe is away with South Africa and David Hopkins, Lee Sharpe and Derek Lilley are injured. "We'll have a head count and whoever is available will play," their manager, George Graham, said.

The new £1.3m signing, Martin Hiden, could be among them.

Following Wednesday's win over Manchester United in the FA Cup, Barnsley come down to earth against Wimbledon. They are unbeaten at home since November but are five points adrift of safety at the bottom of the table and manager Danny Wilson, once the midweek euphoria had dissipated, commented: "If I said I would

swap everything in the Cup for the points, people would say I'm a miserable bugger. Well that's the way I am because we earn our living in the League."

Coventry travel to Crystal Palace hoping to extend their club record six successive victories while Derby, another team with Europe unexpectedly coming into focus, entertain Sheffield Wednesday.

Tottenham and Bolton are unlikely to require much motivation tomorrow at White Hart Lane. Defeat for Spurs would drop them into the bottom three while the visitors cannot allow a gap to appear between themselves and the fourth-bottom team. And John Gregory thought he was under pressure.

## Aston Villa v Liverpool

New Aston Villa manager John Gregory will be without striker Savo Misoevic as he takes charge for his first game today. The Yugoslavian international is out of contention with medial knee ligament damage suffered during Villa's 2-1 defeat at Wimbledon last week. Gregory also has more over the fitness of three more key first-team players - striker Dwight Yorke (calf), midfielder Mark Draper (ankle) and utility player Steve Staunton (hamstring) are all struggling to recover and rated as doubtful.

Liverpool are hoping that Karlheinz Riedle will have shaken off a foot injury in time to replace Robbie Fowler, who will be out for six months with cruciate ligament damage sustained in the Merseyside derby. The German striker has been a frustrated substitute for long periods this season because Roy Evans has persisted with the Fowler-Michael Owen partnership, and Riedle has started only once in Liverpool's last 16 matches. Stig-Inge Bjornebye returns after international duty. Jason McAteer, Phil Babb and Dominic Matteo are definitely out. Paul Ince and Steve McManaman are slight doubts.

## Barnsley v Wimbledon

Barnsley striker John Hendrie (ankle) and defender Nicky Eaden (chest infection) will both undergo late fitness tests before today's game. Hendrie has "improved greatly" after limping out of Wednesday's FA Cup fifth-round win over Manchester United but is unlikely to play to make sure he is fit for the sixth-round tie at Newcastle next weekend. Jan-Age Fjortoft should return in his place. Arjan de Zeeuw is also unlikely to figure despite being close to full fitness following a groin problem, while fellow centre-back Chris Morgan is available again after completing a two-game ban.

Defender Duncan Jupp injured himself during Wimbledon's midweek FA Cup fifth-round replay defeat against Wolves and may miss the trip to Oakwell. His place may be taken by Kenny Cunningham who could return to the starting line-up following a recent ankle injury. Jamaican international midfielder Robbie Earle is struggling for fitness and is thought unlikely that the Wimbledon vice captain will play. The Dons are looking to complete a hat-trick of Premiership wins, while Barnsley are looking to move off the bottom of the table.

## Blackburn v Leicester

Blackburn will be without striker Kevin Gallacher, who starts a three-match ban. Goalkeeper Tim Flowers is also out with a shoulder injury and Anthony Williams has been recalled from a month's loan at QPR to act as cover for Alan Fettes. Billy McKinlay is a major doubt with the calf injury which forced him to be substituted after just 20 minutes of Wednesday's FA Cup replay against West Ham. He will have a late fitness test before today's match. Stuart Ripley and Gary Croft are both suffering from fatigue but are expected to play. Lars Bohinen returns from international duty.

Leicester City manager Martin O'Neill will wait for fitness reports on three key defenders. Swedish international Pontus Karmark faces a late test on an Achilles injury while Matt Elliott and Spencer Prior have had a virus. Tony Cottee is doubtful with a hamstring strain but goalkeeper Kasey Keller returns after missing the last two matches on international duty with the United States. Leicester would move to within two points of their hosts with a win. Blackburn have won once in the last five Premiership games.

## Chelsea v Man Utd

Ed De Goey returns for Chelsea after international duty. De Goey, a Premiership ever-present before missing last week's 2-0 defeat at Leicester, will replace Dmitri Khari, Gianluca Vialli is likely to persevere with the policy of playing himself. Mark Hughes and Gianfranco Zola together, even though the diminutive Italian has not scored for three months. A win for Chelsea could leave them second in the Premiership tonight, and eight points behind United. Defeat would leave them 14 points adrift with 11 games remaining.

Norwegian duo Henning Berg and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer return for Manchester United but the champions are still waiting on the fitness of England midfielder Nicky Butt. Berg missed Wednesday's 1-0 FA Cup defeat at Barnsley because he was away on international duty and Solskjaer has recovered from the virus which kept him out of the last three games. However Butt is still suffering from a calf injury while Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs are unfit and David May is unlikely to be risked. Michael Clegg, Michael Twiss, Ben Thornley and John Curtis should be in the squad but are unlikely to start.

## C Palace v Coventry

Crystal Palace may give a debut to Matt Jansen, who is in the squad today following his £1m move from Carlisle. The 20-year-old is available after being cup-tied for the 2-1 midweek FA Cup defeat against Arsenal. Manager Steve Coppell welcomes back Marcus Bent, who was also cup-tied, but is still without long-term casualties Attilio Lombardo, Michele Padovano, Neil Shipperley and Paul Warhurst. Jamie Smith suffered an ankle injury in the cup match but is expected to be fit. Palace have yet to win at home in the League this season, while Coventry are looking for a seventh consecutive win.

Coventry manager Gordon Strachan will give late fitness tests to David Burrows and Richard Shaw, who both have groin injuries, before naming his side for today. Shaw has missed the last three games, while Burrows collected his injury during last weekend's 1-0 win against Barnsley. "One result might change everything and we have to make sure that result is not against us," said Strachan yesterday. "We have got to be professional and keep our good form going." Coventry have an otherwise unchanged squad.

### And statistics

## How Dalglish has slipped behind Keegan

Their clubs are at opposite ends of the Premiership spectrum, but Alex Ferguson and Joe Kinnear have at least one factor in common: the men at the helm of Manchester United and Wimbledon respectively are the only two managers who have been in charge of teams ever since the Premiership started.

Ferguson, not surprisingly, is the most successful manager in terms of Premiership points won. Indeed, he is the only manager to have averaged more than two points per game. Kinnear is a highly respectable eighth in the list.

While Kenny Dalglish is the second most successful of the current crop of managers, his predecessor at Newcastle,

Kevin Keegan, had a marginally more successful record.

Dalglish's figures are spoilt by his comparatively poor performance during the current campaign: he is averaging only 1.27 points per game compared with 1.87 points last season and his own overall average of 1.83.

Brian Little, who left Aston Villa earlier this week, had also shown a substantial drop on his figures from a year ago: under his charge this season Villa had averaged only 1.11 points per game compared with 1.61 last season and Little's own overall average of 1.38.

Ron Atkinson - who apart from

Ferguson and Kinnear is the only man to have managed a Premiership club for at least part of all six Premiership seasons - shows the best improvement on a year ago. At Coventry last season Big Ron averaged only 0.70 points per game; at Sheffield Wednesday he is now averaging 1.69 points.

The other managers showing significant improvements on their average points yield of last season are West Ham's Harry Redknapp (up from 1.11 to 1.50), Derby's Jim Smith (up from 1.21 to 1.56), Leeds' George Graham (up from 1.18 to 1.50), Leicester's Martin O'Neill (up from 1.24 to 1.48) and Arsenal's Arsene Wenger (up from 1.70 to 1.88).

## How the managers compare

### Overall Premiership records of the men in charge

	Games	Points per game
Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	229	477
Kenny Dalglish (Blackburn/Newcastle)	168	307
Arsene Wenger (Arsenal)	55	98
Roy Hodgson (Blackburn)	26	45
Rory Evans (Liverpool)	161	277
George Graham (Arsenal/Leeds)	171	239
Jim Smith (Derby)	65	88
Joe Kinnear (Wimbledon)	227	304
Martin O'Neill (Leicester)	65	87
Ron Atkinson (Villa/Coventry/Sheff W)	173	227
Gordon Strachan (Coventry)	55	71
Harry Redknapp (West Ham)	144	182
David Jones (Southampton)	27	34
Howard Kendall (Everton)	87	106
Christian Gross (Tottenham)	12	14
Steve Coppell (Crystal Palace)	68	72
Colin Todd (Bolton)	42	43
Danny Wilson (Barnsley)	26	22
Gianluca Vialli (Chelsea)	0	0
John Gregory (Aston Villa)	0	0

### ...and some of their predecessors

	Games	Points per game
Kevin Keegan (Newcastle)	143	264
Bruce Rioch (Aston Villa)	38	58
Ruud Gullit (Chelsea)	63	103
Frank Clark (Nottingham Forest)	97	149
Howard Wilkinson (Leeds)	250	444
Gerry Francis (QPR/Tottenham)	251	443
Mike Walker (Norwich)	188	338
Trevor Francis (Sheff Wed/Sheff Utd)	138	238
Brian Little (Aston Villa)	138	238
Graeme Souness (Liverpool/Aston)	135	235
Glenn Hoddle (Chelsea)	127	227
Joe Royle (Oldham/Everton)	128	228
Ray Wilkins (Sheff Wed)	108	198
David Mead (Sheff Wed/Wednesday)	89	106
Alan Ball (Southampton/Man City)	80	119

Statistics: Brian Sears

## FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

		Home					Away					Form	Upcoming matches			
	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	(last result on right)			
1	Man Utd	27	56	+37	11	2	1	35	16	6	3	4	21	13	LDWW	7 Mar Sheff Wed (A); 11 Mar West Ham (A); 14 Mar Arsenal (A); 28 Mar Wimbledon (H)
2	Arsenal	25	47	+19	10	2	2	29	9	3	6	2	16	17	WDWWW	Monday West Ham (A); 7 Mar Derby (H); 11 Mar Wimbledon (A); 14 Mar Man Utd (A)
3	Liverpool	27	47	+19	9	2	4	29	14	4	6	2	16	12	WDLD	7 Mar Bolton (H); 14 Mar Tottenham (H); 28 Mar Barnsley (A); 4 Apr Arsenal (H)
4	Chelsea	26	45	+23	8	2	1	22	8	6	1	8	30	21	WLWL	8 Mar Aston Villa (H); 11 Mar Chelsea (H); 14 Mar West Ham (A); 5 Apr Coventry (A)
5	Blackburn	26	48	+14	8	3	2	30	16	4	6	3	14	15	LDWL	7 Mar Bolton (H); 11 Mar Leeds (A); 28 Mar Arsenal (A); 5 Apr Chelsea (H)
6	Derby	27	42	+7	9	3	1	25	8	3	3	8	16	26	DWLWL	7 Mar Arsenal (A); 15 Mar Leeds (H); 28 Mar Coventry (A); 5 Apr Chelsea (H)
7	Leicester	27	40	+8	5	7	3	16	11	5	3	4	18	12	DWLDW	14 Mar Newcastle (A); 28 Mar Derby (H); 4 Apr Leicester (A); 11 Apr Chelsea (H)
8	Leeds	26	39	+6	5	3	4	17	14	6	3	5	18	15	LLWD	7 Mar Bolton (H); 11 Mar Blackburn (H); 14 Mar Derby (A); 30 Mar West Ham (A)
9	West Ham	26	39	+2	5	7	3	16	11	5	3	4	18	12	WDLD	Monday Arsenal (H); 7 Mar Crystal Palace (A); 11 Mar Man Utd (A); 14 Mar Chelsea (H)
10	Coventry	27	36	-3	6	7	1	21	14	3	2	8	11	21	DWWDWW	14 Mar Newcastle (A); 28 Mar Derby (H); 4 Apr Leicester (A); 11 Apr Aston Villa (H)
11	Southampton	27	34	-4	8	1	5	23	16	2	2	3	8	29	WLWLW	7 Mar Aston Villa (H); 11 Mar Chelsea (H); 14 Mar West Ham (A); 5 Apr Coventry (A)
12	Sheff Wed	27	34	-10	7	4	4	25	22	2	3	7	16	29	WDLDW	7 Mar Arsenal (A); 28 Mar Southampton (A); 14 Apr Coventry (H); 11 Apr Arsenal (A)
13	Newcastle	26	33	-5	6	6	5	16	16	3	2	6	10	15	WLWLD	14 Mar Newcastle (A); 28 Mar Southampton (A); 4 Apr Chelsea (H); 11 Apr Leicester (H)
14	Wimbledon	25	32	-1	4	3	6	16	16	4	5	3	13	11	LDWW	11 Mar Arsenal (H); 14 Mar Leicester (H); 28 Mar Man Utd (A); 4 Apr Bolton (H)
15	Aston Villa	27	30	-10	5	3	3	17	18	3	3	8	0	20	LDWL	28 Mar Bolton (H); 8 Mar Chelsea (A); 14 Mar Chelsea (H); 28 Mar Everton (H)
16	Everton	27	29	-8	5	2	5	18	18	2	6	7	14	22	WDLD	7 Mar Southampton (H); 14 Mar Tottenham (H); 28 Mar Man Utd (A); 4 Apr Tottenham (H)
17	Tottenham	27	27	-8	5	4	4	14	16	2	2	10	11	27	WLWDL	Tottenham Bolton (H); 4 Mar Leeds (A); 11 Mar Liverpool (H); 28 Mar Crystal Palace (A)
18	Bolton	26	24	-19	3	8	2	11	13	1	4	8	12	29	DLDD	Tottenham Tottenham (A); 7 Mar Liverpool (A); 14 Mar Aston Villa (H); 28 Mar Tottenham (H)
19	C Palace	26	23	-17	0	4	8	7	23	5	5	4	14	15	LLLL	7 Mar West Ham (H); 8 Mar Chelsea (A); 14 Mar Aston Villa (H); 28 Mar Tottenham (H)
20	Barnsley	26	22	-40	4	3	5	14	22	2	1	11	8	40	LWLDL	7 Mar Bolton (A); 14 Mar Southampton (H); 28 Mar Liverpool (H); 4 Apr Leeds (A)

## Derby v Sheff Wed

Danish defender Jacob Laursen could make a surprise return for Derby. Laursen had an exploratory knee operation 11 days ago but has been named in the squad. Striker Deon Burton is available again after returning from international duty with Jamaica and midfielder Jonathan Hunt is back from suspension, but goalkeeper Russell Hout is out. Hout is banned following his dismissal in a reserves match, so England Under-18 goalkeeper Richard Knight will be on the bench.

Defender Earl Barrett will make his Sheffield Wednesday debut as the replacement for Ian Nolan, who broke a leg in the 1-0 home win over Tottenham last week. Manager Ron Atkinson could be without Norwegian international midfielder Petter Rudi, who sustained a hamstring strain in a friendly with France on Wednesday. Defender Dejan Stefanovic is also doubtful after he picked up a back strain, also on international duty, in Yugoslavia's game with Argentina. Striker Andy Booth, meanwhile, is fully recovered from a groin injury and could play in his first game for four weeks.

## Everton v Newcastle

Don Hutchison will make his Everton debut after completing his £1m move from Sheffield United. Howard Kendall's team will be without captain Duncan Ferguson, who starts a three-match ban, while Nick Barry is still suffering from a groin strain. Frenchman Mickael Madar and youngster Danny Cadamarteri will lead the attack in place of them. Terry Phelan attempted a comeback in a midweek reserve match, but suffered a reaction and will now have an exploratory operation on his calf problem. Everton have drawn three and lost one of their last four Premiership games.

Newcastle will be without Alessandro Pistone (suspended) and Steve Watson (ankle). Otherwise the Magpies are at full strength. Gary Speed returns to his former club three weeks after completing a £5.5m move to Tyneside as Newcastle seek their third 1-0 victory over the Toffees this season. Alan Shearer has scored four goals since returning from injury, although all have been in the FA Cup. "If I can help towards three points by scoring a goal or two at Goodison I will be extra happy," he said yesterday.

## Leeds v Southampton

Austrian defender Martin Hiden will make his debut for Leeds, who have defensive worries. Lucas Radebe plays in today's African Nations Cup final for South Africa against Congo. David Robertson remains out after his recent cartilage operation, while David Wetherall starts a two-match ban. Alfie Haland and Lee Bowyer are also suspended while Derek Lilley is still on the injured list. Captain David Hopkins will play after recovering from a calf strain. Leeds have won once in their last five Premiership games.

Kevin Davies (ankle) is a major doubt for Southampton. Egil Ostenstad is likely to continue in attack alongside David Hirst if Davies fails to recover. Carlton Palmer has been cleared to play against his old club after the FA delayed a disciplinary hearing until next month. John Beresford is available after suspension but Ken Monkou is still banned. Paul Jones, ever-present this season, is confident of recovering from a back problem and Francis Benali is hopeful he will shrug off a hamstring injury. Elard Road is the only Premiership ground that Matt Le Tissier, recovering his form recently, has not scored at.

## TOMORROW Tottenham v Bolton

Jürgen Kinsmann will return for Tottenham tomorrow, four weeks after fracturing his jaw. "If anything the injury has allowed me to get even fitter all round," he said yesterday, adding that he had been able to do a lot more pace training to increase his speed. Kinsmann will return to fill the gap left by Les Ferdinand, whose knee injury is likely to keep him out for another couple of weeks. Swiss defender Ramon Vega is still out through suspension and midfielder Stephen Clemence is unavailable with an ankle injury.

Bolton will be without Mark Fish, who is on African Nations Cup duty with South Africa, and midfielder Scott Sellars, who completes a two-match suspension. John Sheridan or Dane Michael Johansen will deputise. "Our season could revolve around this one result," said Colin Todd, the Bolton manager, yesterday. "I wouldn't go so far as to say it's the be all and end all, but a win will have a big significance on this club," he added. If Bolton win, they will move out of the relegation zone and send Spurs into it in their place. Bolton also have a game in hand on tomorrow's opponents.

## FAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Rank	Team	Games	Red	Yellow	Pts	Av
1	Gallagher	15	7	60	633	
2	Gallagher	14	4	64	600	
3	Man Utd	14	2	69	521	
4	Gallagher	14	3	68	486	
5	Dunith	15	3	55	70	467
6	Winger	15	2	59	68	460
7	Dunith	14	2	60	439	
8	Dunith	11	2	37	47	457
9	P Jones	13	2	44	44	435
10	Miley	13	2	42	40	400
11	U Rennie	15	1	56	40	400
12	A Wilson	15	2	46	38	373
13	P Alcock	15	1	47	32	347
14	N Barry	13	1	40	45	346
15	G Ashley	15	2	41	31	340
16	D Gallagher	14	2	37	47	336
17	K Budge	12	1	34	39	325
18	M Borden	10	4	45	30	307
19	S Lodge	16	2	29	45	300
(Premiership matches only; Red cards: 5pts. Yellow: 1pt)						

## UNFAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Rank	Team	Games	Red	Yellow	Pts	Av
1	Leeds	26	3	59	71	285
2	Coventry	27	5	51	76	281
3	Everton	27	3	54	74	276
4	Chelsea	26	3	54	69	256
5	Bolton	26	4	47	67	258
6	Arsenal	26	2	56	66	254
7	C Palace	27	2	53	63	233
8	Sheff Wed	27	3	45	61	228
9	Derby	26	1	58	63	225
10	Blackburn	26	3	41	66	215
11	West Ham	27	3	43	58	215
12	Newcastle	27	2	42	52	200
13	Soton	27	0	44	44	163
14	Man Utd	27	1	44	48	161
15	Barnsley	26	0	41	48	158
16	Wimbledon	27	1	37	42	166
17	Liverpool	27	1	36	41	152
18	Spurs	27	1	31	41	152
19	Leicester	27	1	35	40	148
20	A Villa	27	1	31	38	133



# SPORT

Saturday 28 February 1998

## Fourth Test: Third-wicket pair repair early damage inflicted by Headley and Fraser to give home side the advantage Lara fires West Indies fightback

Derek Pringle  
reports from Georgetown  
West Indies 129-2  
v England

THREATENED by a bomb scare, and with one of his pace bowlers receiving two official warnings for running on the pitch inside the first hour, Michael Atherton's 50th Test as England captain was threatening yesterday to become memorable for all the wrong reasons. But if England had he better of the early exchanges, the afternoon brought the first real explosion, this time from the middle of Brian Lara's bat as the West Indies captain reached his second half-century of the series.

Eleven innings is a long time for someone of Lara's calibre to go without a big score and judging by the care he took over his fifty, he clearly feels he is long overdue. Starting slowly, as an archeologist might on a prehistoric dig, he grew bolder by the minute, eventually treating the England bowlers not as precious relics, but as a child might a favourite plaything.

Dancing down the pitch in Robert Croft's 10th over, Lara launched him high over the Sandals pool at wide mid-on. Two overs later, the power was replaced by precision as he picked Croft off for two more boundaries, as the advertising boardings were disturbed at fine leg and extra cover. Later, he pulled Dean Headley for six high over midwicket, his confidence finally reunited with his aggressive instincts.

The bomb scare, which came

via an anonymous phone call not long after play started, turned out to be a hoax, which was more than could be said for the warnings of the umpire Steve Bucknor against Headley.

The law, designed to prevent bowlers following through and scuffing up the pitch, relies on two parameters, and any bowler who infringes within 12 inches of middle stump and more than five feet in front of the batting crease is liable to receive a warning. If the bowler does it again he gets another warning, while a third results in an immediate ban for the rest of the innings.

As with most laws in cricket, its interpretation fluctuates with the umpire concerned. In Trinidad, for instance, there was evidence of persistent infringement by both sides, but no warnings. Here, Headley had barely put a spike wrong before Bucknor, no doubt conscious of the friable nature of the pitch, issued him with his first warning in the third over of the day.

It was not the start Atherton, having lost his first toss of the series, would have wanted with just two front-line seam bowlers in his side. But if his brow was creased with concern, especially after Headley received a second warning eight overs later, it was tempered by his bowlers' success in the morning session.

The first batsmen to go was Stuart Williams, who began with a crisp cover driven boundary off Angus Fraser and a top-edge six off Headley, was looking his pugnacious self before Fraser struck.

Persevering with that clinical off-stump line of his, the Middlesex seamer squared the opener up, the edge neatly taken by Graham Thorpe, who wisely kept his beady eyes on the ball instead of Alec Stewart's hands, which had encroached from second slip.

Strangely, for a man who fielded superbly in Trinidad, Stewart misjudged another catch an hour later, when he dropped Shivnarine Chanderpaul off Fraser. It proved to be a costly miss, the local hero later passing fifty.

Aside from the bomb scare, which saw England decamp to an area by the sightseeing while Special Branch police combed their dressing-room with electronic devices, it was a morning of caution, with both sides feeling their way on this dry pitch.

For all the potential disruption the warnings might have brought to other bowlers,



England players appeal in vain for a catch to dismiss Brian Lara, the West Indies captain, off Robert Croft yesterday

Photograph: Rebecca Naden/PA

### BOURDA SCOREBOARD

First day: West Indies won toss  
WEST INDIES - First Innings  
S.L. Campbell c Russell 10  
S.C. Williams c Thorpe b Fraser 57  
"B.C. Lara not out 57  
S. Chanderpaul not out 38  
Extras (Rs 105) 9  
Total (for 2, 48.1 overs) 129  
Fall: 1-16 2-38  
To bat: C.L. Hooper, J.C. Adams, D. Williams, C.E.L. Ambrose, I.R. Bishop, D. Ramnarine, C.A. Walsh.  
Bowling (first over): Headley 9-3-20-1; Fraser 10-4-14-1; Bullock 3-0-15-0; Croft 5-1-7-0.  
ENGLAND: M.A. Atherton, A.J. Stewart, M.A. Butler, N. Hussain, G.P. Thorpe, M.R. Ramprakash, T.R. C. Russell, R.D. B. Croft, D.W. Headley, A.R.C. Fraser, P.C.R. Tubbet.  
Umpires: S.A. Bucknor (W) and D.B. Hair (Aus).  
FIRST TEST (Kingston, Jam): Abandoned as dew (dangerous pitch). Second Test (Port of Spain, Trin): West Indies won by three wickets. Third Test (Port of Spain): England won by three wickets.  
REMAINING TESTS: Fifth (Bridgetown, Barbados): 12-16 March; Sixth (St John's, Antigua): 20-24 March.

Headley was the pick of the crop and he consistently beat both openers with a combination of pace, bounce and movement on a surface that looked as dead as the Moon's.

Surviving an early run-out chance when Robert Croft, selected in place of Andy Caddick,

fumbled at mid-on, Sherwin Campbell never looked settled. However, having conceded several moral victories to the Kent paceman, the Barbadian finally succumbed to one that bounced steeply, the edge carrying chest high to Jack Russell as the batsman tried to check his shot.

With Lara already at the crease, there was a murmur of surprise when he was joined by the left-handed Chanderpaul and not Carl Hooper. Unless this was penitence for Hooper's unexplained absence from Guyana's recent game against England, it probably had more

to do with the home side trying to get their left-handers to the crease before England's spinners had enough rough to exploit outside their off-stumps.

The gambit appeared to work, at least it did against Croft, the lone spinner until the 100 was posted. But if Lara and

Chanderpaul began in circumspect fashion, the increasingly tell-tale puffs of balls from Headley and Fraser breaking the pitch's surface saw an acceleration after lunch. With conditions unlikely to improve, England will not relish batting last on it.

## Fifa firm on World Cup tickets

### Football

FIFA, world football's ruling body, is standing by its controversial ticket policy for the World Cup finals which has left England fans scrambling over a few thousand tickets.

Fifa announced that England would be receiving 9,138 tickets for their three group matches. The Football Association has resolved to fight for more, but Fifa is refusing to shift its position, claiming that it announced two years ago how it would distribute the tickets and that the system is the same used for Italia '90 and USA '94.

"It is highly unlikely that the English FA, or any other national associations, will get a dramatic increase in their allocation," a Fifa spokesman said. "The ticketing system was set up two years ago and everyone knew about it and what the distributions would be then. This ticket policy is not really different from the policy at past World Cups. The differences are that the stadiums were larger in the United States, while America was also further away than France."

The spokesman said that the French public were sold the majority of tickets in advance to ensure the financial viability of the tournament. "You can't sell tickets in advance to other countries if they don't know whether they will qualify," he said. "The French public have as much right to attend games as the English public did in Euro '96."

The European Commission has threatened to take action against the World Cup organisers for retaining such a large portion of tickets for the French public on the basis that they have broken European law on free trade. A large fine is the most likely outcome, although the ticketing system could be scrapped.

However, the Fifa spokesman said: "You can't scrap an entire ticketing system four months before a World Cup. We understand that the French organising committee were in contact with the European Union two years ago when the ticketing system was set up and that this was approved by the EU."

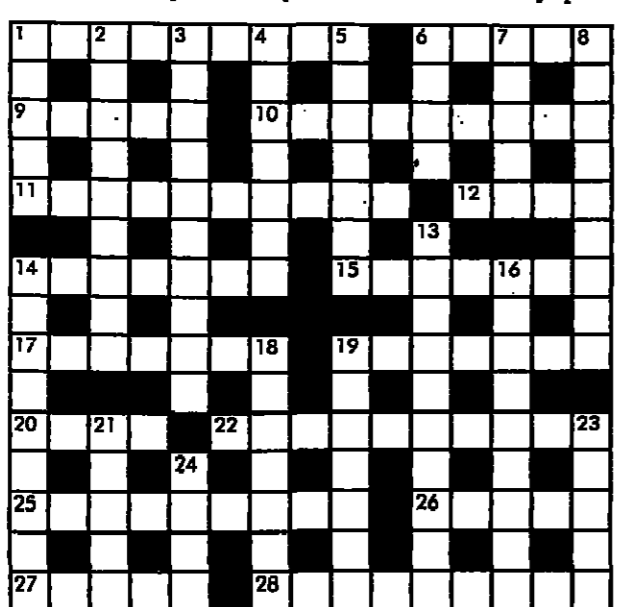
England fans are set to receive more tickets from a reserve batch, but Fifa admits the total will be in the hundreds rather than the thousands.

Security conference, page 6, main section

### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3546, Saturday 28 February

By Spurious



Friday's solution  
Last Saturday's solution

#### ACROSS

- 1 Something in vitamin B complex if one caught a cold, maybe? (5, 4)
- 6 When ready constitutes a thing worth having (5)
- 9 Theatre sponsor providing a new act (5)
- 10 Where you'd find him fed by hoppers (4, 5)
- 11 Description of route taken from roundabout? (10)
- 12 Record of heroic deeds in completely depicted (4)
- 13 Takes article to delineate modern life? (3-4)
- 15 Transport that's very cold in British Columbia, sled with no sides (7)
- 17 Huge insect bites American attending mass (7)
- 19 In English company's record, a study of environmental effects (7)
- 20 Face turned to side ultimately reveals back of neck (4)
- 22 Winding up of mine in Moll signals end of an era (10)
- 25 Vessel with steps inside one's meant to go up (9)
- 26 Thick requires deceptive action, nothing less (5)
- 27 Return of Church Latin having universal approval (5)
- 28 Fielding lapse involves husband in public quarrel (9)

#### DOWN

- 1 One among many World Cup spectators will be charged (5)
- 2 Device for multiplication giving almost right result? No way (9)
- 3 Scheming person often called on to help with functions? (10)
- 4 Time student invested in irksome task? That's a laugh (7)
- 5 Inconvenience as plain clothes officer's upset champagne? (7)
- 6 Pain one gets around heart, primarily (4)
- 7 Dismiss early suggestion of trouble in oil reservoir (5)
- 8 Less-majesty attempt every monarch's prey to (9)
- 13 Agent used to guard against undue shrinkage of dough (10)
- 14 Ring back souvenirs when in France? (9)
- 16 A trouble at Worcester, maybe? (9)
- 18 Bored expression initially evident in Oxford Street house (5-2)
- 19 Obscure bits from films included in middle of speech (7)
- 21 Jewel, ruby originally set in ring (5)
- 23 Parrot flying over Western Australian river (5)
- 24 Season when some get reduced fare (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: M. Jackson, Bolton; D. Brough, Wyllan; E. Walpole, Wakefield; S. Slack, Malvern; D. Gillies, Ayr.

### IN MONDAY'S 20-PAGE SPORTS SECTION



Mika Hakkinen tells Derick Allsop how he is gearing up for the new Formula One season

### TONIGHT

ELEVEN PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 14

## Union looks to commandeer Connolly for World Cup

### Rugby

By Chris Hewett and Dave Hadfield

GARY CONNOLLY, the Wigan rugby league centre widely regarded as the outstanding British midfield talent of his generation, is in demand from both codes of the game. The Rugby Football Union is investigating the possibility of striking a unique joint deal with the Lancashire club that would enable Connolly to play for England in the 1999 World Cup.

Connolly is due to join an Australian league club in June next year, but a successful RFU-Wigan venture could keep him in Britain. The scheme under discussion would see the RFU buy out the player's Australian Rugby League contract, install him in the England squad until the end of the World Cup and then release him back to Wigan, who would thus retain the services of their top-of-the-bill attraction without having to compensate the ARL.

The England coach, Clive Woodward, is an admirer of Connolly's; indeed, he considered him a world-class talent during his brief spell with Harlequins last season. Intriguing-

ly, Connolly has worked closely with another member of England's back-room panel, the former Great Britain rugby league coach, Phil Larder.

However, any attempt to sign Connolly on an RFU contract would automatically infuriate England's leading professional clubs, to whom all players in Woodward's current national squad are contracted. The clubs suspect the governing body of plotting to lure those players away from their club deals and have already fired warning shots across the bows of the RFU hierarchy.

Woodward distanced himself from any move to lure Connolly, insisting yesterday that no approach had been made. "I get letters from rugby league agents all the time and if any of the top English-qualified players decided to join union clubs and make themselves available for the national squad, I'd be delighted," he said. "There is not, though, any plan to sign anyone on an RFU contract. We're working with the clubs, not against them."

But David McKnight, Connolly's agent, said: "There is a wide range of options and we have to explore them all. Gary is in a unique position because he is the only league player who

would be in with a realistic shout of playing in the rugby union World Cup."

Any signing of Connolly by the RFU would be seen as the first bridgehead in the contractual battle between clubs and country. Talks between the two sides aimed at agreeing a standard player contract to cover both international and domestic rugby have broken down after four months and six sets of draft proposals, and the clubs fear that a big-name signing would encourage the RFU to go after the leading union figures, starting with the national captain, Lawrence Dallaglio.

There are, however, influential figures within the RFU who believe the signing of Connolly would send all the wrong signals to the current batch of England centres and Woodward himself emphasised yesterday: "I'm pretty encouraged by the talent we have coming through and I have to say that we already have strength in depth at the top end."

Should Connolly stay with league, sources in Australia have suggested that Wigan would settle the ARL compensation bill and sign the player on a three-year deal worth more than the £250,000 a year he could make in Australia.

هكذا من الأصل

PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



# YOUR MONEY

Personal finance, property & motoring

Saturday 28 February 1998



## Run from the taxman

Scottish pension savers will be much better off than their English counterparts if the new Parliament raises income tax to the limit, it was confirmed this week. Alistair Darling, the chief secretary to the Treasury, confirmed that the tax element of the Scotland Bill will allow pension savers to get tax relief of up to 26 per cent – compared to just 23 per cent south of the border. On retirement, tax-conscious Scots will be able to save a substantial sum by heading south, a legal kind of cross-border arbitrage. **Page 2**

## Fire sale on savings

Savers are being offered a glut of cut-price deals on PEPs in the rush to make use of tax-free allowances before they disappear in April 1999. Save & Prosper is cutting the 5.5 per cent upfront charge on PEP money invested in its growth and income fund, while TSB will offer a discount worth up to £300. If savers invest before 5 April, they can put aside up to £9,000 for 1997/8, which incurs tax relief on growth and pays out tax-free. **Page 3**

## Glad to see them go

The £15bn mega-merger of two of the UK's biggest insurers, General Accident and Commercial Union, has been given a surprise welcome by the Consumers Association. "Ironically it's actually good news for consumers. There are still over 100 insurance companies selling endowments, savings and pensions. It's extremely difficult for the consumer to look at thousands of different policies," said Mick McAteer, senior policy officer. Our commentators give their own reactions. **Pages 5 and 8**

## INSIDE

Collectables with John Windsor **Page 3**

Jonathan Davis **Page 5**

Pensions special survey **Page 6 & 7**

Motoring **Page 9**

Property **Page 11 & 12**

## New knight to save us from chaos

The Government is to appoint a 'super' ombudsman to be the champion of consumers in distress. Darren Behar reports.

A brave knight in shining armour – or, more boringly, a Financial Services Ombudsman – is about to ride to the rescue of consumers who suffer abuse from financial services firms.

The ombudsman's appearance, forged out of a confusing array of lesser ombudsmen, aims to provide mere vassals like ourselves, unversed in the minutiae of financial services regulation, with a single source of redress for our complaints.

In his new role as champion of the people, the knight (sorry, ombudsman) will act as an Arthurian hero, chairing a semi-Camelot consisting of all the old ombudsmen, for whose activities he will now be responsible.

The creation of a supreme ombudsman, set to happen by the end of the year, marks the culmination of a months-long consultation process by the new Labour Government. In his new role, the ombudsman will merge eight separate redress systems presently operated by banks, building societies, insurance firms, financial advisers and investment firms.

In so doing, he will end the confusion at the heart of the existing system, whereby even key questions, such as consumer eligibility to complain, limits on awards made, time limits and procedures to be followed, vary wildly between ombudsman schemes.

The Financial Services Authority (FSA), the new, all-encompassing City watchdog, will regulate the scheme, with all firms regulated by the FSA also being covered by the new ombudsman.

The change follows long-voiced criticisms by consumers about the current system. Up to now, complaints about the treatment dished out by a financial company could be dealt with by a variety of ombudsmen, depending on their nature.

For example, if at present an insurance company refuses to pay compensation on a matter concerning a household policy, the matter is considered by the Insurance Ombudsman. If it were life insurance or a pensions issue, this would be the fiefdom of the PIA Ombudsman. But if it is a fund management quarrel, the Investment Ombudsman takes over.

Compensation is also tricky. The PIA Ombudsman can force insurers and independent financial advisers to

pay a maximum of £50,000 compensation. In addition they may have to pay up to £750 for distress or inconvenience. But the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation's Ombudsman can force investment houses to pay £100,000 plus £750 for distress.

The super-Ombudsman will have powers to force firms to pay up to £100,000 in compensation and £1,000 for distress and inconvenience.

Perhaps not surprisingly, not all current ombudsmen welcome the change in its entirety. They are also concerned that such a compulsory system with binding decisions could mean the FSA would be forced to introduce full court procedures. David Thomas, the Banking Ombudsman, feels the FSA could be contravening the European convention on human rights if it did not introduce such legal procedures.

Tony Holland, Ombudsman for the Personal Investment Authority, the existing frontline regulator, feels the new system will help consumers identify where to make a complaint.

Mr Holland says: "In today's market of many ombudsmen, the perceived problem is that there is a confusion among consumers about names and functions. A single body would help solve this confusion."

But he worries that the super-ombudsman could become a bureaucratic nightmare which will scare consumers if it is allowed to be too big.

More surprisingly, not all consumer organisations are too happy with the new supreme either. They fear it will slow down the complaints procedure and lead to a pile up of cases waiting to be processed.

The Consumers' Association believes the system could stack the odds against the complainant. It is worried the formal nature of the scheme will push consumers into the lion's den or court against financial heavyweights such as banks and insurance companies.

"The problem with the new system is that it will be run as a series of hearings which lawyers can attend. This could scare less well off people away," says Philip Telford at the Consumers' Association. Consumer groups favour the current free complaints system of independent arbitration over formal legal challenges.

Another stumbling block for con-

sumers could come if mortgages are not brought within the FSA but banks and building societies are. Under this idea, consumers will be able to pursue a complaint against NatWest Bank or Nationwide Building Society but not against a lender like the Mortgage Corporation.

Mr Thomas, the Banking Ombudsman, and the National Consumer Council (NCC) are also concerned that many consumers will be unaware of the distinction between firms regulated by the FSA and those not.

They fear consumers will want to see a simpler definition. The NCC

wants the Government to extend the ombudsman's coverage to areas outside those not regulated by the FSA.

Consumer groups also want the best features from the existing ombudsmen saved when creating the

new supreme. They fear the flexible nature of the current system will be lost.

The size of the new ombudsman also threatens to boost costs. Under the current system consumers can

meet with the ombudsmen, making the process a more human, less cold one. Consumers could also lose out as the FSA cuts back on the number of staff with specialist knowledge and expertise.

The Government has already burdened the FSA with bringing the financial services regulatory regime under one roof.

Consumer groups fear the regulator may not have enough resources to ensure the new white knight's mission to protect consumers is a success. The problem could mean he is rushed into fully operational status with rusty armour and a weak lance.

### Where do I go to make a complaint?

Firms covered	Ombudsman	Telephone
Banks	The Banking Ombudsman	0171-404 5544
Building societies	The Building Society Ombudsman	0171-931 0844
Life offices, financial advisers	The PIA Ombudsman	0171-218 0016
Insurance firms and agents	The Insurance Ombudsman	0171-928 4488
Investment firms	The Investment Ombudsman	0171-796 3065
SFA firms	The SFA Complaints Bureau	0171-378 8000
Insurance companies	Personal Insurance Arbitration Service	0171-837 4483
FSA firms	The FSA Direct Regulation Unit	0845 606 1234

### Spotlight: Matrix Securities Newcastle Trust

**The product:** The Matrix Securities Newcastle Trust.

**The deal:** Take £5,000, or borrow at least £22,000, and invest it for at least seven years. The investment buys units in an Enterprise Zone Property Trust which builds and develops part of Hadrian's Business Park,

east of Newcastle upon Tyne. The units benefit from tax relief of 37.6 per cent if you are a higher-rate taxpayer. Investors will receive a rental income of 7.5 per cent – plus a share of the property's value if and when it is sold.

**Plus points:** Because of the tax

reliefs, it is possible to invest in the trust with no cash outlay. An investment of £100,000 could be made up of £62,400 plus £37,600 in higher rate tax reliefs.

Matrix can arrange a loan of up to 70 per cent of the total investment – or £70,000, leaving an effective cash

surplus of £7,600. The rental income should then pay off the interest on this loan – and some.

The company developing the trust puts down a deposit which pays the rent for up to seven years or until a tenant is found. Sometimes, returns in similar trusts have been very high

– equivalent to interest of 19 per cent. **Drawbacks and risks:** The trusts got a bad name because of the late 1980s property debacle, Canary Wharf. Tenants could not be found and investors were left with massive losses.

Industry observers believe the commercial property market in the

North-east may be somewhat artificial. Investors need to be confident that tenants are thoroughly reliable.

**Verdict:** Attractive to a higher-rate taxpayer willing to tie up money for at least seven years – and take a risk. **Marks out of five:** Two and a half.

In the July Budget, the Chancellor announced that tax exempt savings schemes will change in April 1999. As a result you may not be able to continue to enjoy the current tax benefits offered by a PEP. However, the Government has announced that a new tax privileged vehicle is to be introduced – the Individual Savings Account, or ISA for short. Full details have yet to be confirmed and we are currently in discussion with the Government as to the future implications for PEPs. The price of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up, you may not get back as much as you invest. The value to you of the benefits will depend on your own circumstances. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. M&G do not offer investment advice or make any recommendations regarding investments – we only promote the packaged products and services of the M&G marketing group. **Source:** M&G Securities, offer to last gross income reinvested to £11,129.77. **\*\***See general performance over 5 years to £11,129.77. **Source:** M&G Securities UK Growth and Income sectors. **The** M&G Securities Limited (Regulated by The Personal Investment Authority). Registered Office: M&G House, Victoria Road, Chelmsford CM1 1FB. M&G Unit Trusts are managed by M&G Securities Limited (Regulated by IMRO and The Personal Investment Authority).

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ROBIN AMLOT  
INTERNET  
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## Banks upgrade their websites

The web is not immutable. The number of households in Britain with access to the internet more than doubled from 1996 to 1997. By June this year it is likely to have more than doubled again, and over 2.5 million people have access to the internet at work. Over a quarter of a million people are shopping online each month and one in 10 has already used their credit card to make a purchase on the internet.

Barclays, Halifax and Woolwich have all recently upgraded their websites, increasing the interactive nature of what is available. Three or four years ago, too many financial services providers seemed to feel it was enough merely to provide a home page with links to a glorified version of their printed sales brochure. However, things are changing and content has improved substantially.

Woolwich Insurance Services now has an online market search, select and buying system. The service offers the UK's first online household insurance, with real-time comparative quotations as well as enabling you to purchase a policy online by paying for the initial premium through an online credit card transaction. The Woolwich site also offers the option to be connected to an adviser during the search and transaction process.

The added extra magic ingredient "human being" is also on offer at Barclays' relaunched personal banking internet site. It offers an interactive "call me" facility on Barclays Mortgages pages and new pages for Barclays Premier Banking and Barclays Life - the bank's life assurance and pensions arm. Through the "call me" button on the Barclays Mortgages pages, you can request a mortgage specialist call you immediately or - if more convenient - in five minutes.

However, the "call me" service is still not quite the "Martini banking" which the internet

should offer. It is only open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm on Saturday and 11am to 3pm on Sunday. Barclays claims it can complete the application process over the phone in around 20 minutes.

For the very sad auroaks among us, the Barclays Life pages, as well as providing information on products and services, allow you to download a "Harry and Doris" screensaver based on characters from a recent ad campaign. Barclays Premier pages introduce the bank's relationship banking service (you know, the kind of relationship we all used to have with bank managers when banks actually had bank managers) and offers information on products, such as the Barclays Premier Mortgage, that are available exclusively to Barclays Premier customers.

Halifax has completely redesigned its website, giving it its second new look since first being established in May 1995. It now offers you the facility of applying online to Halifax Direct for various banking products; both current accounts and unsecured personal loans. Online Halifax Visa Card applications will follow shortly. You can also get quotes for and purchase travel insurance online.

Halifax shareholders may also check up on the value of their investment by entering the number of shares they hold. A branch locator also allows you to find the address of your nearest Halifax branch.

A separate internet site is being developed for offshore savings customers with Halifax International (Jersey) and Halifax International (Isle of Man). The new site will concentrate on offering products to expatriate and UK customers who wish to manage their tax affairs by investing savings offshore.

Barclays: [www.barclays.co.uk](http://www.barclays.co.uk)  
Halifax: [www.halifax.co.uk](http://www.halifax.co.uk)  
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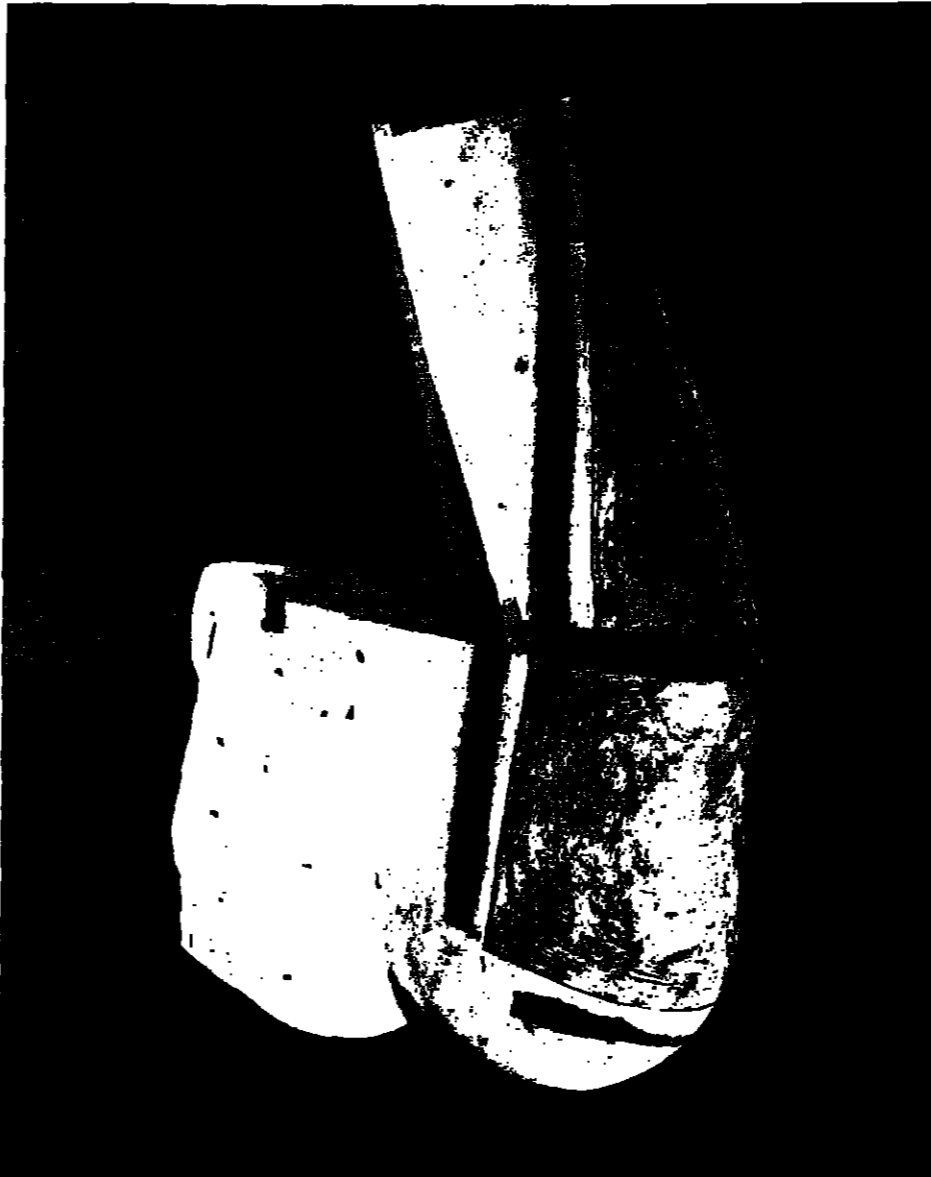
Collect to invest  
John Windsor

Prices of contemporary ceramics are likely to get a shot in the arm with the opening next month of the Barrett Marsden Gallery in Islington. Its co-founder, Tajana Marsden, formerly director of the charitable crafts organisation Contemporary Applied Arts (CAA) and now a ceramics consultant to Christie's, has taken the controversial step of making London-wide exclusivity agreements with 13 artists, including such established names as Alison Britton, Martin Smith, head of ceramics at the Royal College of Art, and the veteran Gordon Baldwin, recently retired head of ceramics at Eton College.

Hitherto, the London contemporary ceramics market has been an economic anomaly. Unlike the picture market, in which a multitude of galleries sign up artists exclusively and promote them in one-man shows, the contemporary ceramics market has few galleries and has been dominated by Bonhams, the auctioneers, where dealers are often outbid by private collectors.

The new gallery, occupying 2,500 square feet in Great Sutton Street, Farringdon, will help to lift studio pottery out of its down-market rut as mere craft. At present, very few contemporary pots, even by top names, command more than £3,000, the price a voguey, little-known art college graduate might get for a painting. It is financed by Nelson Woo, a wealthy Hong Kong Chinese collector of contemporary ceramics living in London. He said: "Unlike America or Holland, there are very few galleries in London where talented ceramists can get a showing." He declined to discuss how much the gallery is costing to set up.

The exclusivity agreement, under which the 13 have agreed



A pot of money: Gordon Baldwin's ceramics, like this vessel from his Longspout series, 1989, fetch up to £2,800

not to attempt to sell their work through other London galleries or auctioneers, has already raised hackles. Martin Smith has cancelled his one-man show at the CAA in September and Gordon Baldwin's one-day show

scheduled for May at Galerie Besson - the biggest of only four London galleries that put on one-man contemporary ceramics shows - is in the balance.

Many of the 13 are members of the CAA, where a selling ex-

hibition "A View of Clay", curated by Alison Britton and including the work of Gordon Baldwin and Richard Slee, also now exclusively with Barrett-Marsden, will still be on show when the gallery opens on 13 March.

The CAA's director, Mary La Trobe-Bateman, said: "I find the exclusive showing rights disturbing. We still have work by a lot of these people in stock and have had no word from them about whether they are going to withdraw it."

During Ms Marsden's directorship of the CAA, which ended in 1990, the trend was towards gallery-style shows of adventurous, sculptural ceramics by artists such as Ewen Henderson, Alison Britton and Bryan Illsley (another Barrett-Marsden member). But the CAA now has 260 members, including textile artists and jewellers. "We have a lot of stock," said Ms La Trobe-Bateman. "It really doesn't allow one-man shows."

At the new gallery, there will be few prices above £3,000, an indication that prices have slipped in the past decade.

The new gallery will charge up to £3,000-plus for the work of Gordon Baldwin and Martin Smith. Their ceramics, and those of another gallery member, Ken Eastman, are semi-abstract artworks, quite unlike craft pots, that expand the concept of the vessel to its limits.

The new gallery is bound to accentuate the rivalry between dealers and auctioneers. At Bonhams last November, a Baldwin open bowl of 1982, estimated £1,800-£2,500, fetched £2,070. In June, a stoneware vessel by Britton, estimated £1,500-£2,200, sold for a below-estimate £1,380. At the CAA, a Britton pot with pleated spout is on offer at £2,400. But in April at Bonhams, a Britton pot will carry the bullish estimate of £2,200-£3,000 - a sign that higher prices are firming up.

Gallery goods are fresh to market and undamaged, so their value tends to be higher. Members of the new gallery will get back only 50 per cent of prices paid (a standard gallery rate) compared with about 80

per cent at Bonhams. But Ms Marsden said: "Buying at auction is bargain buying. It's damaging for the artist."

She said she hoped that in five or 10 years' time there would be "a healthy network of galleries like ours throughout Britain. Everybody is going to be better off. If artists have spent months making a piece, the same consideration should be given to how it is going to be shown. Work should not be displayed like bags of sugar."

"If our artists have agreed regular exhibitions with other galleries we will not ask them to break those relationships. We're just trying to plug the hole we have identified. For me, it is now or never."

The typical Barrett-Marsden ceramist is ex-RCA, around 50-years old, and with an established reputation both here and abroad. For them, an exclusive relationship with a London gallery makes sense. They will no longer have to hump pots between galleries, argue prices with clients and do paperwork.

Alison Britton, aged 50, who was offered a solo show by the CAA after committing herself to his new gallery, said: "At my age, I want to feel that someone is taking care of how my work should be displayed. At the age of 30 I would have said yes to any gallery and hoped for the best."

Or, as Gordon Baldwin, aged 65, said: "Tajana told me 'You need somebody to look after you'."

Barrett Marsden Gallery, 17-18 Great Sutton Street, London EC1V 0DN (Telephone: 0171-336 6396).

Correction: The auction of the Swaythling apostle spoons is next Thursday, 5th March (10.30am) at Sotheby's, 34-5 New Bond St, London W1 (0171-293 5000), and not as stated here last week.

## BARGAIN BASEMENT

Save & Prosper is slashing the entire upfront charge of 5.5 per cent for people who invest more than £4,000 in its growth and income PEP by 5 April. Investors who put in at least £1,000 will receive a smaller discount of 3 per cent. The fund currently pays out 2.4 per cent, twice a year.

TSB is offering an upfront discount of £300 to investors who put the maximum allowable amount of £6,000 into a TSB PEP before 3 April. The discount applies to amounts going in to its Tax Free Savings Plan PEP. A smaller discount, of £120, will be given on savings going into TSB's High Income PEP.

Legal & General has launched a new PEP which aims to give 140 per cent of the growth of stock markets in Britain, Germany, France and Switzerland. The PEP will be available between 2 March and 9 April in order to

allow investors to save up to £18,000, using tax allowances for both 1997/8 and 1998/9. Growth is capped if the investment doubles its value within six years.

Northern Rock will launch an instant access, offshore account on Monday that pays up to 8 per cent a year, gross of tax. Investments of £10,000 or more will earn 7.5 per cent gross a year. Only three withdrawals can be made in any one year without incurring a penalty.

Manor Park, the offshore investment specialist, is launching a range of funds that offer to protect investors' capital against market falls of up to 5 per cent. The funds offer a share in growth of the FT-SE 100 index in London, the Nikkei 225 in Japan, the Hang Seng in Hong Kong, the S&P 500 in the US or the DAX 30 in Germany. Lower levels of

protection combine with higher shares of any growth in the respective markets.

Sun Life has combined with Royal Bank of Scotland to produce an innovative means of funding the needs of elderly relatives needing mobility aids. The product combines an endowment with Sun Life with a loan facility at 10.6 per cent interest. Interest is only repayable on the amount of the loan that is used to fund home aids. The facility can also be used for some kinds of medical treatment.

Aberdeen Investment Trusts is offering shares in its Convertible Income Trust, which aims to provide a high-dividend yield together with the potential for capital growth. As at 31 December, the dividend yield was 7.9 per cent gross. The offer, which can be arranged within a PEP, is open until 26 March.

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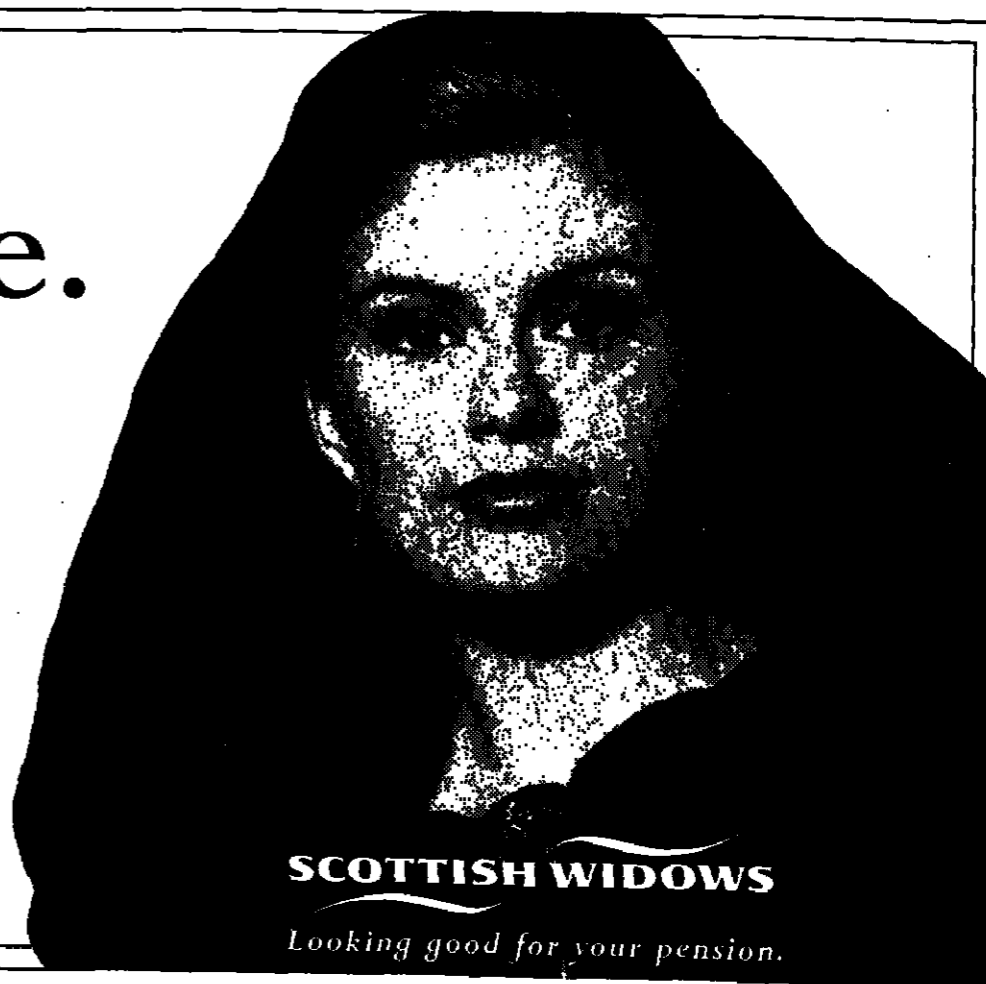
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# How to profit from reading the big print

An ever-increasing number of specialist magazines are targeting readers in search of personal finance advice. **Iain Morse reports.**

What is it with personal finance magazines? Every few months, it seems, another is launched – each one aiming to grab a slice of the burgeoning market for financial information that can help turn us all into millionaires.

Perhaps more prosaically, magazine readers are reacting to a development, initiated by the Tories but continued under Labour, whereby the traditional welfare safety net is gradually being withdrawn. Providing for oneself, be that in the field of pensions, health insurance or long-term care, has become more crucial. Financial magazines, along with personal finance sections such as this one, are there to help us sort out the wheat from the chaff.

Earlier this month, *Bloomberg Money*,

yet another consumer magazine, hit the news stands, aiming to inform its readers of the perils and profits of personal investment. The question publishers of all these mags, including *Bloomberg Money*, must answer is what kind of market are they aiming at?

At one level, the potential readership is still largely untapped. Put in perspective, the personal finance sector is a small one; while *Cosmopolitan* and *FM* magazines each have monthly sales in excess of 450,000, the 28 personal finance titles sold in the UK achieve joint monthly sales of just over 200,000.

According to Sarah Marshall, of distributor Comag: "This is a niche market which surprisingly has not much increased in recent years." Generating total annual turnover of around £6.5m, titles rely on loyal readerships, with annual subscriptions an important source of revenue.

Most titles offer generous discounts on subscription due to the high cost of selling off newsstands. Each time you buy a magazine, about half its cover price goes to the publisher, with the rest split between distributor and retailer. Industry estimates suggest that as many as two-thirds of copies sold go by subscription.

Launching a new title is expensive. Ms

Marshall reckons it will cost about £5 in promotion per copy sold, and the minimum launch period is at least three months. Because these magazines go to retailers on a sale or return basis, it takes four weeks before the publisher knows how many copies have been sold, or receives its share of cover price.

History in this sector is littered with heroic failures. Barely two years ago, another glossy mag, *Inside Money*, was pulled after barely six issues, after sales remained stubbornly low.

This should make the launch of *Bloomberg Money* a nerve-wracking affair. But the magazine's editor-in-chief, Lawrence Gosling, is a confident man. "With more people buying financial products, we see a gap in the market. Existing titles are either too specialised or just too general. We don't just want to take readers from rival publications, but reach a new readership."

Mr Gosling's comments give a clue to the approach taken by the publishers of the various financial magazines. Their starting point is that not all potential readers are the same. They may be relatively new to savings and investment, in which case a more "poppy" magazine such as *Moneywise*, published by Reader's Digest, is most likely to suit their needs.



Paper investments: Even before you decide where to put your money, publishers are after your cash

Rui Xavier

Or they may see themselves as more sophisticated, whereupon the share-tipping strategy of *Investors Chronicle*, part of the *Financial Times* stable, is a preferred read. Or they may be fiercely loyal to the more iconoclastic editorial approach of *Money Observer*, a bizarre offshoot of the *Guardian* media empire.

Either way, there are plenty of choices

for most types of readers out in the market.

One possible threat to editorial quality (and independence) comes from the fact that advertising revenue can account for as much as 80 per cent of a title's total income. Navigating between the giving of straight – and occasionally critical – information about finance and not offend-

ing your advertisers can be difficult. Most manage to steer clear of selling themselves to the devil. Ultimately, their readers will decide.

Meanwhile, *Bloomberg Money's* launch copy carries a picture of Richard Branson wearing inflatable horns and a sinister expression. Is there anything he won't do for publicity?

## Best buys: The personal finance magazines to put your money on

### Money Observer

Launched 1979

Monthly circulation: 35,000

Cost: £3.25. Annual subscription: by cheque £33, by direct debit £29.70.

Aim/target: "Our readers tend already to have some knowledge of the market." Strength: Easy to read databank on share, unit & investment trust performance. Tessa and mortgage best deals. Feature-length analysis of subjects like smaller company investment.

Weakness: Too many uncritical fund manager profiles. No coverage of personal insurance.

### Investors Chronicle

Launched 1860

Weekly circulation: 61,000

Cost: £2.50. Subscription discount: 10 per cent.

Aim/target: "By comparison to others, we simply are more focused on shares than packaged retail financial products."

Strength: Reviews every share quoted in the UK at least once each year. Weekly,

so up to date on market movements. Weakness: Dismissive of retail financial products, little cover on personal insurance.

### Personal Finance

Launched 1994

Monthly circulation: n/a

Cost: £2.60. Subscription discount: 37 per cent.

Aim/target: "Novice investors, who know little about money and retail financial products."

Strength: Relates lifestyle to product, with a strong emphasis on insurance and pension planning. Weakness: Superficial analysis of products, with thin data on product cost and performance.

### Moneyfacts Life & Pensions

Launched 1996

Monthly circulation: 6,000

Cost: Annual subscription only, £49.50 (ring 01692 500765).

Aim/target: "We provide hard data across the full range of products, from

mortgages to investment trusts. This is a reference work."

Strength: The bottom line without frills or hyperbole.

Weakness: No articles, and only available by subscription, so try your nearest central library for a copy.

### Bloomberg Money

Launched 1998

Monthly circulation: first issue 30,000

Cost: £2.95. Subscription discount: 25 per cent.

Aim/target: "We're aiming both at committed investors, and people getting interested in the subject. We want to bridge the gap between specialist investment magazines and those that aim [uncritically] for the mass market."

Strength: Early days, but coverage ranges widely from a critical piece on fund manager M&G to the merits of collecting Spice Girl dolls as future investments. Good data on fund performance.

Weakness: Picture of Richard Branson on the cover.

### Moneywise

Launched 1990

Monthly circulation: 105,000

Cost: £2.70. No discount on subscription

Aim/target: "To give people financial advice they need to make real life decisions, in plain English."

Strength: Could its breezy, easy style account for *Moneywise* having the highest circulation of titles reviewed? Starter level package with emphasis on practical, every day financial problem solving.

Weakness: Sometimes not enough in-depth critical analysis.

### Money Management

Launched 1962

Monthly circulation: 20,000

Cost: £5.50. Subscription discount: 10 per cent.

Aim/target: "We are the bible of the personal finance magazines. We publish in depth surveys of retail product types and refuse to take providers at their word."

Strength: Tells you all you ever wanted to

know about a subject, and has a very good fund performance data. Authoritative.

Weakness: Designed for industry professionals, boringly written, so make sure it has an article you want to read before buying.

### What Investment

Launched 1987

Circulation: 35,000

Cost: £2.75. Subscription discount: 30 per cent.

Aim/target: "Geared to experienced investors who already have knowledge of collective investment vehicles."

Strength: Only title reviewed to focus solely on unit and investment trusts, and private pension funds.

Weakness: Not for the beginners. Nothing on personal insurance.

### What Mortgage

Launched 1982

Monthly circulation: 35,000

Cost: £2.38. No subscription

Aim/target: "Forty-nine per cent of

readers are first-time buyers. 30 per cent remortgaging, so they want simple, informative and unbiased copy."

Strength: Covers main stream mortgages, but also features on self-build and loans for the self-employed. Mortgage factfile covers "99 per cent" of available loans.

Weakness: Nothing but mortgages. Extremely repetitive: bit like a wedding magazine, you are only likely to read it for a few months

### Your Mortgage

Launched 1986

Monthly circulation: 15,000

Costs: £3. No subscription

Aim/target: "There are fewer lenders offering more varied loans. We try to help you choose the right kind of loan, before you approach a lender."

Strength: February's issue offers you the chance to win a power washer worth £1,000!

Weakness: Thin mortgage factfile, same criticisms as above.

— Iain Morse

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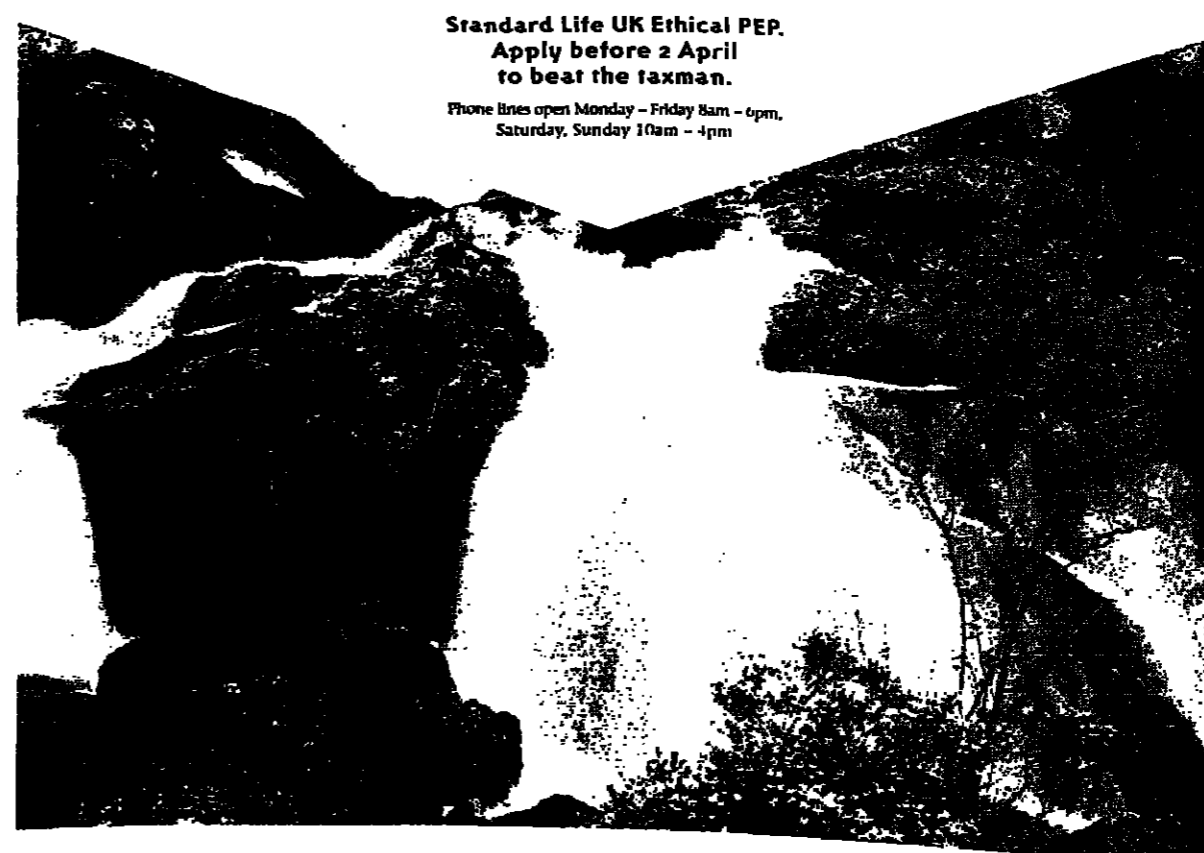
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## You can bank on some more mega mergers yet



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It was without question a tale of two big corporate deals in the stock market this week – one that looks like working well and the big one which fell to earth. Wednesday's announcement of a tie-up between Commercial Union and General Accident is one of those deals, like Lloyds/TSB, which

seem to make such obvious and logical sense that you wonder why it has taken so long to happen. You don't need a business degree to see that there are potential benefits to be had from pooling two long-established companies which are experiencing growing competition and need to attack both their revenue and cost structures if they are to generate better returns.

It won't make them better companies *per se* (General Accident already, rightly, has the reputation for being quicker to adapt to the tougher new industry environment than the much-sleepier Commercial Union), but it will give them a fresh opportunity to get their act together more quickly than they could do on their own.

The trick, of course, has been to bring the two sides together in a harmonious way. It is interesting to see that the companies were advised respectively by Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, a sign of

how rapidly the American investment banks are moving into a lead role in UK corporate finance. Even a few years ago, the idea that two of the biggest US investment banks should be taking the lead in such a deal would have been unthinkable.

The Glaxo/SmithKline Beecham saga is a more dramatic, if less savoury, story all round. Viewed from a broad international perspective, the case for a merger was also clear cut, and one reason why the deal was greeted so favourably by the market, which marked both companies' shares up by handsome margins when it was announced – a reversal of traditional City experience, which holds that only one side normally benefits from a big merger of this sort.

The fact that the deal has unravelled so abruptly, ostensibly because of arguments between the two companies about which management team should command the lion's

share of the top jobs, is a useful reminder that the momentum towards big company mergers and acquisitions is not quite as inevitable as the investment bankers would have you believe.

It has left the management of SmithKline Beecham in particular looking vulnerable. Having pulled out of one merger deal, with the American company American Home Products, in order to throw in its lot with Glaxo Wellcome, the company is now in a state of limbo – publicly advertising the fact that it needs to combine with another large company, but seemingly unable to bring such a deal to fruition.

Barclays, which has allowed itself to appear as if it is desperate to strike a deal with a rival bank, is in danger of finding itself in a similar hole.

From an investor's point of view, the run of big company deals – both successful and abortive – is important. It is no accident that the three sectors

where most of the big deals have been happening are pharmaceuticals, banks and insurance. These are precisely the sectors which, as I mentioned last month, have been leading the advance of the FTSE 100 index for most of the past 18 months.

The three sectors accounted for more than half the index's advance last year and are, in essence, the reason why the Footsie index has so massively outperformed the small and medium-sized sectors of the market for most of that time. This trend, as my chart shows, has continued in the first few months of this year.

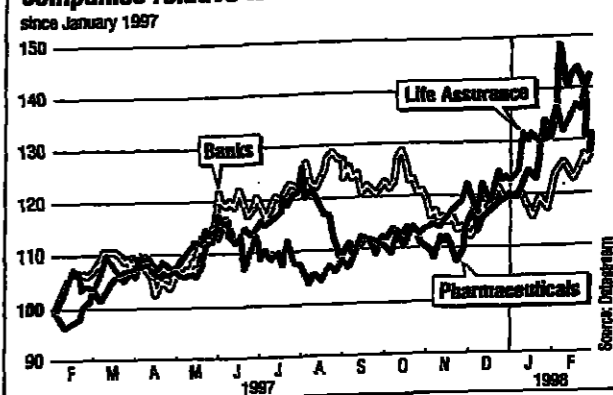
If the run of deals dries up, then the market is likely to suffer a hangover, just as it did the day after the Glaxo/SmithKline merger was called off. But my view is that we are not yet finished with the consolidation process, certainly in banks and insurance. Nils Taube, Lord Rothschild's stock market adviser and one of the shrewdest

investment brains around, has been skewing his funds towards the financial sector for at least two years. As manager of one of the best performing European funds over the last 30 years, who brings a genuinely international perspective to his stock selection, he was one of the first to see that pressures which were driving banks and insurance companies to combine were bound to persist.

As long as the drive towards European integration persists, that pressure will also persist. Like Anthony Bolton of Fidelity, another leading fund manager, Taube has demonstrated that there is an awful lot of money to be made by picking up early on a broad theme of industrial change and running with it as long it persists.

If it does persist, you can be certain that several of the recently demutualised building societies and insurance companies will find themselves in the way of a bid or a merger

Performance of banks, insurers and pharmaceutical companies relative to the FT All-Share Index since January 1997



proposal. Don't rush, in other words, to take your profits on those windfall shares, despite their strong gains since flotation. As we learnt this week, while the drive towards consolidation in the drugs industry has filtered, the trend is still very much alive in financial services.

*'Money Makers' by Jonathan Davis, a study of Britain's most successful professional investors, has just been published by Orion Business Books at £20. To order a copy at the specially discounted price of £15 (including postage and package) call 01903 736736, quoting the reference number MMID.*

### UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

#### Aim for risky rewards with smaller companies' shares

The Alternative Investment Market – known as AIM – has a double purpose. First, it is the London Stock Exchange's public market for small, young and growing companies, enabling them to raise capital and see their shares more widely traded.

Second, the market is intended to appeal to investors who are looking for the high growth rates that can sometimes come from small companies.

"AIM stocks can offer the possibility of above average earnings as they have a greater capacity for very high growth rates than larger companies," says Tony Hobman, head of Private Investor Services at ProShare.

But the chance of extra growth comes at a price. Before you rush out to buy shares quoted on AIM, Mr Hobman adds, be cautious. AIM companies may hold out the hope of higher returns, but they can be riskier than their stock market counterparts.

AIM was launched in June 1995. Although some cynics consider that AIM gives investors a ticket to a roller-coaster which is likely to end in disaster, such criticism is overdue. Since its launch, only two companies have gone bust though a few others may not escape this fate.

There have been incredible successes. For example, Surrey Free Inns was launched in AIM

in July 1995 at 85p. When it transferred to a full listing as SFI in September 1996, its investors had seen a 450 per cent gain.

However, AIM is a "wealth warning" market, which is not for the fainthearted. If AIM attracts you, here are a few golden rules to follow:

- Obtain a copy of the prospectus – your stockbroker may be able to help. If this is not possible, get a copy of the latest annual report and accounts.

- Research the background of the directors and main shareholders. These are detailed in the prospectus, while the names of directors also appear in the annual report and accounts.

- Ascertain the company's free market (capitalisation) from your broker. This is the number of shares available to the ordinary public. If the market is narrow, the sale of just a few shares could result in a significant fall in the share price.

- Self-praise is no praise. Be very wary of companies which promote their success by public relations specialists.

- An advisory stockbroker can be very useful as they are likely to have details of the company's announcements and will pick up gossip before you.

- Above all, follow your instincts. If you have bad vibes about a company, steer clear.

— John Andrew

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Few pensions give enough for a comfortable retirement. Abigail Montrose explains why four out of five workers are not saving enough

## Prepare to retire in comfort

Being in a pension scheme does not automatically guarantee a good pension. In fact, just one in five workers is on track for a comfortable retirement, according to a recent survey by NatWest Life, the investment arm of NatWest Bank.

The survey suggests that on average we need £179 a week to make life comfortable in retirement. This figure represents half national earnings, so those earning more will need a larger pension to retain their standard of living in retirement.

The basic state pension for a single person is £62.45 a week, or £99.80 for a married couple. Employees who have contributed to the state earnings-related pensions (Serps) will receive an additional state pension. But even if you have contributed throughout your working life and retire on average earnings, the maximum additional pension is £53.40 a week. Saving for retirement becomes key.

If you are in your company's pension scheme, you can contribute up to 15 per cent of your annual salary into the scheme each year. This is on top of anything your employer is contributing.

The final pension you receive will depend on the type of scheme your employer offers, but the maximum pension is two-thirds of final salary. Few people will achieve this.

If you are in a final salary scheme, your company will pay you a pension when you retire which will be based on your final salary and how long you have been in the scheme. To find out how much pension you can expect, speak to your personnel department. If it looks like this will be inadequate, ask about making additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) to boost your retirement provision. Your company may offer its own AVC scheme, which is usually the best option. You can go to an outside provider but the charges are normally much higher.

If your occupational pension scheme is a money purchase scheme, your pension contributions will be invested for you and your final pension pot will be based on the investment performance of the fund. You then use this money to buy an income in retirement. Every year you will receive a statement telling you how your pension



Stand out from the crowd: By checking out how much your pension will provide

fund is performing and what the estimated value of it will be when you reach retirement. You should ask your pension provider how much income your pension fund is likely to provide when you come to retire. Again, if it looks like being inadequate you should consider making AVCs.

"Those in personal pensions should speak either to their pension provider or their financial adviser to find out if they are on target for an adequate pension," says Ian Parker of Black Horse Financial Services, the pensions arm of Lloyds Bank. "We can project how much your pension pot will finally be worth

when you retire and how much income this might buy you. But this does not take into account inflation, which will erode the buying power of your money."

To work out the likely effects of inflation, ask your adviser for help and adjust your contributions and pension target accordingly. According to NatWest

Life, an annual rate of inflation of 5 per cent would reduce the buying power of £179 to £87 in 20 years.

If your personal pension looks like falling short of your target, increase your contributions or consider retiring at a later age. Often, you can arrange for personal pension contributions to be increased each year either by a set amount or the rate of inflation.

Unlike occupational schemes, maximum annual contributions to a personal pension are age-related. Under-35s can invest up to 17.5 per cent of their salary each year, rising to 20 per cent at ages 36 to 45, with the top tier being 40 per cent at age 61 and over.

You also need to keep tabs on any different sources for your pension provision. Jobs for life are a thing of the past, so most of us will accrue our pension provision from a variety of sources. It's a good idea to keep all records of any pension schemes you have been in and your financial adviser should be able to help you work out exactly what provisions you have and how much these are likely to be worth.

## How to pick the best policy for a personal pension

Dido Sandler looks at the different merits of unit-linked and with-profits policies

So you've finally heeded the advice and decided to take the pensions plunge. You now have to work out where to invest your hard-earned savings.

If you opt for a personal pension you will have a wide investment choice, both in terms of the company you choose and the type of fund in which you invest. You will be faced with two main types of investment vehicles: with-profits and unit-linked funds.

With-profits is a safety-first investment vehicle. It protects investors from

the harshest swings of the stock market by having a "smoothing" effect on investments. So if the markets have a particularly bad year, the effects are averaged out over the term of the policy.

The mechanism that ensures this smoothing effect is the bonus system of payouts. This means filling an individual's pot with a proportion of the fund's growth on an annual basis, and the rest as a final or "terminal" bonus. Annual bonuses are guaranteed - they cannot be taken away from the pension pot.

The investment strategy that underpins with-profits funds is relatively cautious, and the returns may be more limited than those of unit-linked funds. This is because the system of annual bonuses requires a significant proportion of money to be invested in gilts - government loan stock with typically low risk and low yields.

Mike Baugh, head of research with DBS, a network of independent financial advisers, says: "People with short investment terms, that is 10 or so years, are probably better off with with-profits plans because these afford more protection against the vicissitudes of the stock market. Over a longer period, the markets tend to even themselves out, so the protection afforded by with-profits is not as important."

Don Clark, managing director of Wolverhampton-based advisers Torquil Clark, adds: "Individuals with longer to go until retirement should go for maximum growth by buying into unit-linked funds." But he warns: "If Trevor McDonald announcing on the 10 o'clock news a fall in the FTSE 100 of 200 points makes you have sleepless nights, stick to with-profits."

Choosing the best with-profits fund

is a tricky business. Bob Marriott, research manager at Sedgwick Noble Lowndes, says: "If the free asset ratio - or the proportion of assets to liabilities - in a fund is high, this should lead to better future returns."

The returns, and the effect of charges, are more transparent with unit-linked funds. The structure is similar to unit trusts, in that the saver's cash buys into units in a collective investment fund. This is often a "managed" or "balanced" fund, which contains a mix of a broad range of investments.

Managed funds are seen as relatively safe because of this spread, although they are more risky than with-profits because a smaller proportion of the money is invested in gilts.

But managed funds are not the only option. Life companies have many funds to choose from. National Mutual,

for example, has an overseas equity fund, a UK equity fund, property, new Far Eastern, USA and Japanese funds, as well as a deposit fund. So individuals have a greater choice with unit-linked. But they also need a greater degree of confidence to be able to switch money between managers.

Factors influencing investment decisions include performance and prospects for specific sectors, and changing needs. If you are within five years of retirement, you may decide to switch over to a gilts-based or deposit fund, to avoid any last-minute market volatility imperilling your pension pot. Most providers offer customers a phased transfer service, which eases them gently into lower-risk investments.

Dido Sandler is a journalist at *Financial Adviser*.

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## Is your scheme fit for your life?

When you are saving for 20 or 30 years it pays to pick a flexible investment plan.  
**Simon Read** explains.

Comparing personal pensions to gymnasts may seem incongruous but, oddly enough, it's fairly appropriate as analogies go. The best gymnasts are those who are most "bendy". I'm sure there's a proper term for their ability to throw their bodies into different kinds of alarming shapes but, whatever it is, the winners have it.

likely to be used by those who switch jobs often, work on contract, are employed by firms that don't offer a company pension or who are self-employed. All these people need flexible financial arrangements.

"Few people work for the same company forever anymore," points out Siobhan Mackey, of Clark Conway, a firm of independent financial advisers.

"You may have to take time off to raise a child, you might become self-employed or take some time out to go travelling. You might want to retire early or you may become ill and not be able to work and therefore you would make no contributions. These lifestyle changes will all have an effect on you and your pension planning."

Finding a flexible pension arrangement among the traditional pension suppliers can prove tricky. Most frown upon the notion of taking time off from your pension or of paying in irregular amounts at different

times, and may penalise you for doing so.

On the other hand, direct pensions providers use flexibility as a major selling point. "We only charge £2 per contribution rather than making a monthly charge as other do," says Gordon Maw of Virgin Direct. "So if you want to opt out while pregnant or miss payments at Christmas, for instance, you won't be incurring any charges."

Limited flexibility is available from traditional pension providers in terms of missing payments, but only at a cost. As

Siobhan Mackey explains: "Some of the problems of lack of flexibility with traditional plans can be quashed by investing in low-cost waiver of premium, which protects your payments in the event that you are unable to work because of ill health."

For the greatest flexibility you should look for schemes that give you the choice of paying in monthly premiums, irregular amounts, or investing a larger lump sum once a year. In effect, you're looking for a scheme which allows you to contribute to your pension when you can afford to.

Many of the more modern schemes will nowadays allow you to take payment holidays and they are worth seeking out. For example, this means that if you are self-employed and have a particularly bad year, you can save on your pension contributions and use the cash to put back in the business, which can be crucial for those who experience cash-flow problems. Likewise, if you fall pregnant and want to go off and look after the child during pre-school years, you can do so without penalty.

"Charges can have a major effect on your fund," says Siobhan Mackey. "Get your adviser to explain the key features document which sets out charges. You will then be able to compare different pensions on the basis of their charges."

Of course, performance is the ultimate factor in determining whether your pension will be any good or not. Sadly,



Flexible friends: Make sure your pension shapes up

this is not something you can ever guarantee. But finding the right investment means being informed about the different opportunities available. There are high-risk and low-risk opportunities and it is possible to mix and match to get a good combination of both.

Do bear in mind that you could be investing for several decades. "The performance of

different funds may not look like much year on year but it all adds up," says Siobhan Mackey. "Over the last 20 years, the difference between the best and worst performing funds has been double, if not more."

Keeping regular checks on your pension fund performance as you approach retirement is a sensible strategy. You'll find that you should get annual state-

ments from your provider. These will give you an idea whether you need to increase your contributions, within the limits, to reach your pension target.

For most of us, pension planning is likely to be a 20 or 30-year business. Decisions made now may need to be revisited in five, 10 or 20 years time as circumstances and needs change.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT PENSION

The kind of pension you are looking for should allow you to:

- Stop and start your contributions without penalty
- Increase or decrease contributions without penalty
- Have a charging structure which does not penalise you in the early years
- Choose between different funds at will and with little or no penalty
- Switch to a lower-risk fund when close to retirement
- Have payments made for you when you are unable to work

## Deal direct – and you can keep the middleman's cut

Cheaper charges, no salesmen at your door – a new breed of providers are now offering pensions over the phone.  
**Simon Read and Tony Lyons** report.

Buying a pension over the phone offers convenience and cost savings. You can simply sit back at home and dial the company of your choice. By cutting out the middleman and not having to pay commission to advisers, this new breed of pension providers is more cost-effective.

The concept has been hugely successful, prompting many others – such as Eagle Star, Scottish Widows and Legal & General – to join the throng.

Like Direct Line, which has recently joined the list of direct pension providers, many are relative newcomers to pensions, such as Virgin, Marks & Spencer and investment trust managers such as Foreign & Colonial, Flemings and Edinburgh Fund Managers.

The best direct plans offer flexible policies that meet the lifestyle needs of their customers. They allow premiums to be increased, lowered or even stopped at will, without penalty. But even better, they do not carry the high charges of their traditional competitors.

But have these cost-cutting companies had the same effect as direct insurers had in the mid-1980s, of bringing overall prices down? The short answer is no. At least, not yet.

But the signs, albeit tentative, are that some companies are responding to the telephone providers' challenge. "We've seen a move away from the horrible reduced initial allocation system," says Gordon Maw, marketing manager at Virgin Direct. "Many traditional pension providers are now introducing level initial allocation."

Under the traditional charging structure, the bulk of charges was incurred upfront. This meant that only a small percentage of your pension contributions at the beginning, the reduced initial allocation, was actually added to your pension pot. But some direct providers

still accuse traditional companies of levying excessive fees by underhand means. "The charges have just been redistributed across the lifetime of the policy," explains Mr Maw. He points to the fact that, unlike many traditional pension providers, Virgin has no bid-offer spread. The spread is the price between buying and selling investments and is, in effect, a turn, or profit, made by some pension managers.

But choosing a pension on price alone could be a huge mistake. You must also look at the potential performance of the fund you choose to invest in. Investment strategy is also crucial when planning your retirement fund. There are high-risk and low-risk opportunities and it's possible to mix and match to get a good mixture of both with most providers.

Virgin Direct, for instance, offers just two funds – a stock market index tracker to produce growth for the early years and an income fund which investors are switched into as they get within sight of retirement to protect their capital.

Not all the direct pension providers offer such a limited range. Eagle Star, which entered the market 15 months ago, offers a variety of funds, plus the opportunity of allocating varying amounts of cash between them. Edinburgh Fund Managers offers 36 funds from different investment houses while Fleming Investment Trust Management offers 25 funds. Merchant Investors Assurance, the first company to move into direct pensions back in February 1995, offers 23 funds.

*The Independent* is offering readers a free *Guide to Direct Pensions*, written by Nic Cicutti, this paper's personal finance editor, and sponsored by Eagle Star Direct. For a copy call 0800 776666, or fill in the coupon below.

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First Direct	0845 800 0000	5.25% to 5.1.00	80% £250 No MP for adv up to 50%
<b>VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES</b>			
First Direct	0800 800005	5.00% to 5.1.00	80%
First Direct	0800 800005	4.50% to 5.1.00	80%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	5.00% to 5.1.00	80%
<b>FIRST TIME BUYERS RATES</b>			
First Direct	0800 800005	4.40% to 5.1.00	80%
First Direct	0800 800005	4.40% to 5.1.00	80%
First Direct	0800 800005	4.40% to 5.1.00	80%
<b>FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES</b>			
First Direct	0800 800005	5.70% to 5.1.00	80%
First Direct	0800 800005	5.50% to 5.1.00	80%
First Direct	0800 800005	5.70% to 5.1.00	80%

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<b>UNSECURED</b>		
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First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
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First Direct	0845 800 0000	7.9% to 9.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	7.9% to 9.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	7.9% to 9.9%

Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £25k over 5 yrs
<b>OVERDRAFTS</b>		
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First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

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First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

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<b>STORE CARDS</b>		
First Direct	0845 800 0000	9.9% to 11.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

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<b>GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)</b>		
First Direct	0845 800 0000	9.9% to 11.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £25k over 5 yrs
<b>OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)</b>		
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First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £25k over 5 yrs
<b>NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (gross)</b>		
First Direct	0845 800 0000	9.9% to 11.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £25k over 5 yrs
<b>GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)</b>		
First Direct	0845 800 0000	9.9% to 11.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%
First Direct	0845 800 0000	12.9% to 14.9%

## BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>INSTANT ACCESS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
<b>INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>NOTICE ACCOUNTS &amp; BONDS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>CHEQUE ACCOUNTS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>FIXED RATE BONDS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>FIRST TESSAS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>FOLLOW-ON TESSAS</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day

Telephone	Account	Notes	Deposit	Rate %	Interest
<b>NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (gross)</b>					
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day
First Direct	0800 800005	Savings	Instant	5.1%	Day



BRIAN TORA

## The bulls survive M&A trauma

Well, you win some and you lose some. Holders of Glaxo shares might reasonably consider themselves to be among the losers, even though the price has performed pretty well over the past year or so.

Still, a 10 per cent dive on the back of the ending of merger talks with Smith-Kline Beecham was hardly good news. And don't you just love the language. Cultural differences? Failure to determine who would be head honcho in advance, more like.

Actually, Glaxo was the top dog, so it could hardly have been a surprise to learn they expected to be in the driving seat. The trouble appears to be that they wanted to provide most of the passengers as well. After all, Smith-Kline Beecham was not just a drugs company. Strip out toothpaste and Lucozade from the SKB portfolio and their pharmaceutical operation becomes dwarfed by Glaxo.

And you couldn't possibly have executives from a company where one of the best selling brands was Ribena running parts of a multinational drugs business. Unfortunately, the deal had been billed as a marriage of equals, so a climbdown was the only way out.

There is certainly an insurance merger in the offing. In one of the worst kept secrets of the week, Commercial Union announced it would be bedding down with General Accident. Using the mechanism of a share offer from CU, a new company is to be formed entitled "CGU". It could have been worse. In the past, Commercial Union has been known as CUACO and its Perth-based partner GAFLAC. Imagine giving those two acronyms together as a corporate identity.

All of this feverish activity has been enough to push markets on both sides of the Atlantic into new high ground. In America the hostile takeover is back - usually an indication that share prices are overvalued, which couldn't be further from the truth.

It is even returning in some measure in this country, with Argus the subject of unwelcome attention of GUS and some of our more enthusiastic market watchers suggesting that Smith-Kline Beecham could be in play. After all, they have been left at the altar twice.

We must be getting very blasé on the M&A front in this country. But it has shown that as one door closes, another opens. Predictions that the collapse of the drugs merger would provide a needle with which to pierce the stock market's apparently indestructible bubble proved to be wide of the mark.

The bull case was given further endorsement this week by other insurers, GRE, offering to repay closer to £200m to shareholders. Heavens knows if a bull trap exists out there, but it seems as though our rampant animal managed to side-step the opposition - this week at least. But don't ever forget that a trend is only a trend until it stops.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton Investment Strategy Committee.

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But you'll probably say you've been too busy to attend to this yourself - or perhaps managing money today just seems too complicated.

Maybe you think you should entrust your money to an expert. If you do, you may be disappointed. The shocking truth is many professional fund managers are not much good at what they do. Most of them do more poorly than the Stockmarket as a whole. The only certainty about letting others manage your money is that you'll let them help themselves to a chunk of it through their fees.

IN FACT the widely-accepted Random Walk theory says that you will beat the pros at picking shares by simply blindfolding yourself and sticking a pin in the share table in your newspaper.

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So the question is: Why pay fat commissions and "management fees" to have a so-called professional manage your money?

What about seeking advice from a financial adviser - someone who'll give you sound and impartial advice on what best to do with your hard-earned money. Well, you're going to have to look quite hard.

Firstly, most financial advisers aren't independent. They're not even allowed to call themselves that. That's because they're employed by the big financial fund managers to sell their products, and their products alone. They're really just salesmen.

So what about those who are allowed to call themselves independent financial advisers? Consider this fact: most IFAs earn their living from commission from the products they sell. Yet some of the best investments are run by firms which pay no commission. How likely do you think it is they'll be on your IFAs' shortlist of recommended investments if there's a commission-paying firm offering a remotely similar product?

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# Cheat an estate agent? You must be joking

Suppose you sell your house privately, some time after the estate agent has given you up as a bad job. What about your agreement with them? Penny Jackson lays it on the line

It is not unusual for anyone living in a popular area to find a friendly note from a frustrated house-hunter on the doormat, asking whether they are interested in selling.

The prospect of a hassle-free, commission-free sale can be tempting for anyone thinking of moving, but for those who have already put their homes on the market it is too late to cut out the agent.

All sorts of ingenious and even genuine stories about Australian cousins of a neighbour, and friends who have had their eye on the house for 10 years, won't wash once an agreement with an agent is in place. Neither will withdrawing a house from the market, then selling it a few months later.

Elizabeth Moore found herself in an increasingly common predicament. She had no shortage of prospective buyers for her family home in south London, but could find nothing to buy. After months of fruitless searching and failed negotiations on the part of the agent, she took the house off the market for what turned out to be six months.

She says: "Right at the beginning, people we knew turned up saying they wanted to buy. Even though they'd heard about it from friends, we referred them to the agent. They kept in touch, and when we finally found somewhere, we asked whether they were still interested at an increased price. We went ahead with the sale and did all the negotiations ourselves. We did inform the original agents, if somewhat reluctantly, given their non-existent role."

Although the Moores felt that not to



The key to a hassle-free handover: a discussion with the estate agent at the outset should prevent misunderstandings if the purchase goes private

have done so would have been indefensible, they did draw the line at paying a multiple agency fee. "We said we would only pay the sole agency fee of 2.5 per cent." Multiple agency fees are likely to be 3 to 3.5 per cent.

Certainly, since all terms, conditions and fee structure have to be confirmed in writing, there is little room for misunderstanding. Some agents even ask the vendor to sign the document, although that is not required by law.

However, a recent ruling in the court of appeal against an estate agent could mean some rather close scrutiny of standard terms. The court decided that an agent with sole selling rights was not entitled to commission where, during the agency agreement but without any involvement by the estate agent, the vendors answered a newspaper advertisement from prospective purchasers which led to an exchange of contracts for the sale of the property after the agency agreement had expired. The court

did not consider that it was made clear to the vendor that he was liable to pay commission for a sale outside the agreement period, when the introduction was not effected by the agent.

A discussion of all such details at the outset tends to prevent problems from brewing, says Ian Stewart, of FPD Savills. "Once we set everything up and produce good competition, we expect full commission even if the property is sold to a private buyer. After all, on many occasions it

isn't until the marketing starts that many of the vendors' friends discover the house is for sale. But if there's very little interest and no offers, I believe there should be some compromise."

He also suggests a break clause after a period, so that client and agent can get together to review strategy. "If we have any doubts about the quality of a client, we are prepared to withdraw. There are those few, particularly with off-shore companies, who are bluntly [warned off] regardless of any

contract or agreement they have signed."

But it is not always easy to spot even the most outrageous defaulters. Peter Young, of John D Wood, vividly recalls the only two occasions when clients failed to pay up. "One man turned out to be on the run from an open prison. Every time I met him at his house, he should have been inside. Once I had sold the house he disappeared altogether. I wasn't surprised to find out that he had been jailed for fraud."

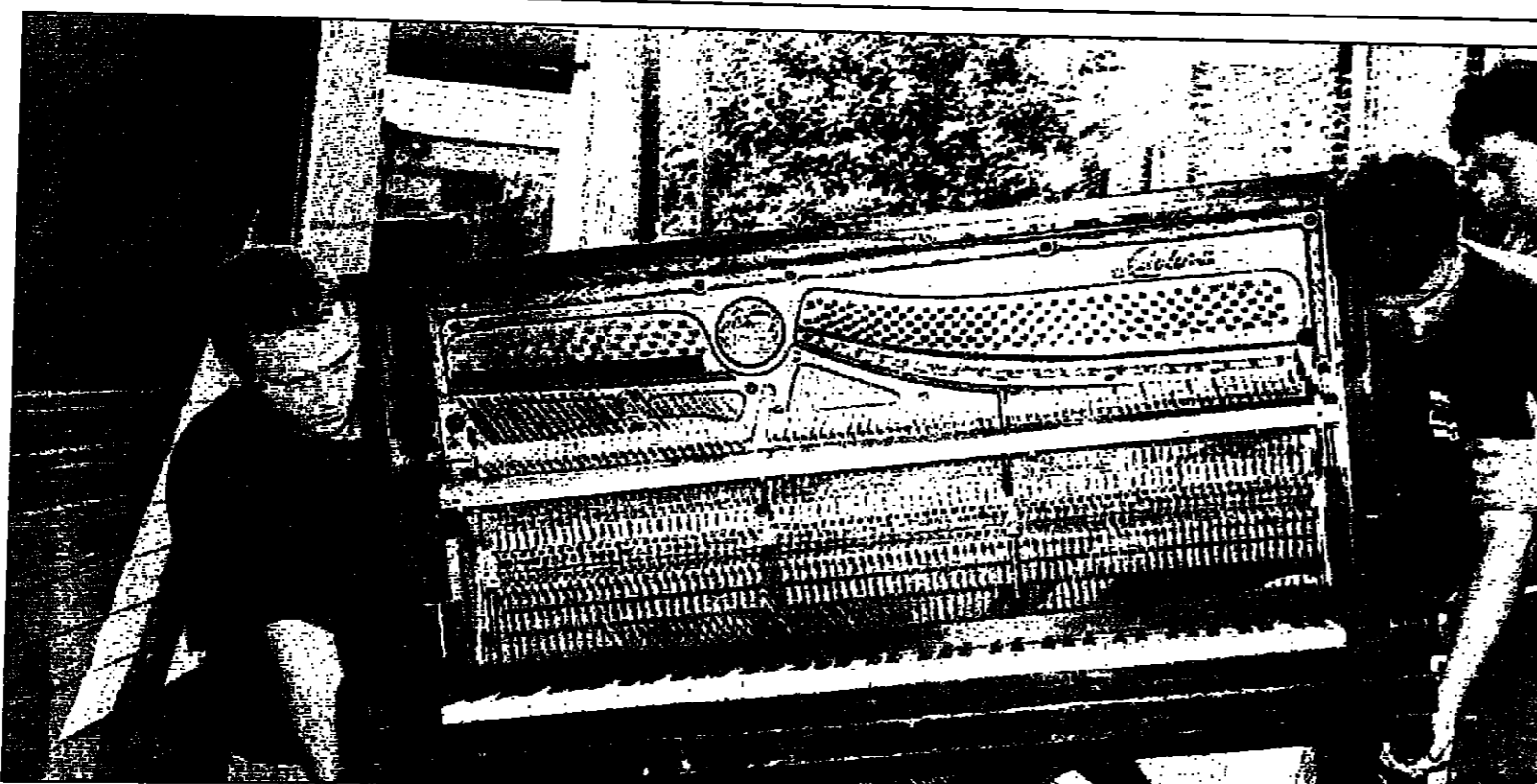
His other client used the rather more conventional deception of suddenly taking the house off the market. "I only found out years later, when the purchaser asked me to sell the same house and he produced the details I had originally sent out. I happened to meet the vendor again, and had a huge amount of pleasure in doing him out of two rented homes."

Generally, estate agents accept that there are some customers they will lose. They can't keep checking on everyone who has ended an agreement to see whether they have sold to a buyer introduced a year ago by them. But it does seem that the very few slippery customers around are not the ones who are strapped for cash.

Brian D'Arcy Clark, of Chesterfield, had a client with a £4m house in Kensington who swore that his purchaser had been introduced by friends. "I always ask at the beginning whether there is anyone interested in buying," he says.

Colin Strang Steel, of Knight Frank in Edinburgh, still has to collect from the owner of a castle. "Alarm bells ring when clients don't live in the property, the correspondence file is thin, and the owner moves out well before the sale is completed, leaving no forwarding address."

But Winkworth, in London, could not have foreseen a protracted legal case arising from the sale of a celebrity's house. "We ran a massive marketing campaign and achieved £100,000 more than the asking price, and a letter from the owner thanking us," says Kate Clark. "He then refused to pay commission, claiming he hadn't wanted the publicity. In the end he had to pay the full commission, plus interest, plus costs." Sometimes 2 per cent can seem very reasonable.



Greed or carelessness is usually involved if a move goes wrong – and it's usually on the part of the vendors rather than the removal crew

## Don't blame the removalists...

Moving disasters are not always the fault of the men who cart the furniture, says Robert Liebman

John Horsefield still recalls the most horrific move he was ever involved in. A removal man with 20 years' experience and now a trainer with Pickfords, Mr Horsefield was part of a team moving a young Merseyside family into an expensive new home. The removal men were about to start loading the truck when what had otherwise been a routine job.

"Everything was going smoothly until the customer received a phone call and they backed out," he recalls. "They turned a half hour later in a truck. The wife was out of control. They'd gone to their new home. The welders had been working in the loft and the situation caught fire. The house burned to the ground."

Despite suddenly having nowhere to go, they still had to leave their current premises. He put aside some food and clothing for them, loaded the truck and took their belongings to a warehouse. We brought them to a local hotel, and later moved into a friend's empty house."

Such extreme and extremely rare instances may tell us nothing

more than that the gods have a sadistic streak. But they go some way towards dispelling the myth that when a move goes wrong, the only people to blame are those working for the removal company.

Of course, tales of hapless removalists who smash precious artefacts are common. Yet that may not always be the whole story: when a move turns into a disaster, some form of greed or carelessness is usually involved – more often than not on the part of vendors.

Anthony Ward-Thomas, the owner of Ward-Thomas Removals, explains: "We arrive at properties that have been gutted or are a building site where we don't even have floorboards to walk on. The new owners have had builders in, but the property is not ready on moving day. The owners have not inspected, and the builders have not admitted it."

Builders are but one potential source of trouble. "It is not uncommon in winter to find that the pipes have burst and the premises are full of water. As soon as they have sold the property, many vendors just want to get out. So they leave without thinking about things like the weather getting much colder," says Mike Potter, sales and marketing manager of Abels Removals.

The slightest disruption can affect the cost of a move: "Once we have allocated resources to a removal and we can't finish through no fault of ours, or can't even do the removal at all,

someone still has to pay. If the men are idle, we've allocated time. There's no other job we can send them to," Mr Potter explains.

Wasps or bees can easily do the trick. "If the nest is near the front door where you need access, we may have to wait for a pest controller, and in some locales that can take hours," Mr Potter says. Also problematic

**Stories abound of vendors who take the light bulbs, but this can have a darker side**

are vendors who take their washing machines but fail to disconnect them properly. If the kitchen area, the damage is contained, at least insofar as the move itself is concerned.

Stories abound of vendors who take the light bulbs, but this well-known phenomenon is only part of a story that can have a darker side. In addition to taking the bulbs, some occupiers take the light fixtures too. Removal men are greeted by bare wires dangling from walls and ceilings. If it is already dark, the unloading stops before it has even begun.

Things can be worse, says Mr Ward-Thomas, especially if a sale has been acrimonious. "The sellers sometimes take the fuses with them. We did a move where everything fused as soon as someone turned a light on. One of our men noticed that the fuses in the fuse box had been switched around." The individual who put a 13-amp fuse wire in place of a 3-amp wire was literally playing with fire.

Some sellers take items of far greater value than light bulbs. "People moved out taking a decorative sink with them," says Mr Potter, who cautions against decorative fittings generally. "We arrive at properties and find that thieves have already paid a visit. They've nicked fireplaces, sinks, baths, banisters. There's a lot of money in architectural fittings."

Thieves target modest as well as grand properties. "Even small terraced houses in poor neighbourhoods are not safe, if they contain cast-iron Victorian cooking ranges."

Rural properties have their own peculiarities. Mr Potter recalls one move into a house where the French windows had not been secured. Evidence, most of which was on the floor, suggested that sheep from a neighbouring farm had been making themselves at home. At least sheep eventually leave. Most removal men know of families who have moved into properties where resident cats refuse to yield the vacant possession.

Mr Ward-Thomas recalls a

country move that was nearly disastrous for the movers. "Our driver drove under the bough of a tree, but after the truck was unloaded, it raised six inches and we couldn't get out. We had to let the tyres down. When trees, outbuildings, archways and courtyards are concerned, some of our customers don't always tell us of potential height restrictions."

Sarah Kampe, whose company Moving Solutions helps people in all aspects of moving home, was involved in a recent move in which people moved into their new home and found not only that the sellers had taken the chandelier but that, in removing it, they left a huge hole in the ceiling and on the landing. "This was one of those jobs where everything was gone: light fixtures and light bulbs, too lights and too-roll holders."

Even though the vendors had moved overseas, they were tracked down and had to pay for the damage. Ms Kampe adds: "They also had to return the chandelier at their own expense."

**Abels Removals, Norwich Road, Watton, Norfolk IP25 6JB, 01953 882666; Moving Solutions, 56 Denison Street, London SW18 2JS, 0181-355 4477; Pickfords, Heritage House, 345 Southbury Road, Enfield EN1 1UP 0181-219 8000; Ward-Thomas Removals, 13 Abbey Business Centre, Ingate Place, London SW3 3NS, 0171-898 0144 or 134 Heath Street, London NW3 6TP, 0171-794 0600.**

## The carrot and stick approach to home sales

All those smooth walls and boxy rooms may not be your scene, yet new houses are selling like hot cakes. In spite of being able to sell almost every house they build from plans, or just before the building work is completed, developers still appear to be bending over backwards to give homebuyers a good deal.

Part exchange, chain breakers, easymovers, mastermovers, deposits paid, mortgage subsidies – the variations on incentives are endless. So what's in it for them? All lead to faster sales: good for the customer and even better for the builder's cash flow and profit margins.

"The same kind of deals just aren't available in the second-hand market," says John Anderson, sales and marketing director of Taywood Homes. Taywood has struck a deal with Midland Bank and is currently offering customers a competitive two-year fixed-rate mortgage of 5.99 per cent with no strings attached. In the last four months 140 purchasers have taken up the offer. All mortgages are subject to status.

Fairview Homes will help to arrange mortgages through selected banks and building societies and these loans can be tied in with paying a purchaser's 5 per cent deposit or a mortgage subsidy of up to £3,000. "If someone's a bit nervous about committing themselves to a mortgage until, say, a car loan has been cleared, we can help with payments for an agreed timescale," says Stephen Casey. "It can make the difference between buying a one-bedroom or two-bedroom flat."

First-time buyers have the most choice. "Move in for £99" deals, like those from Barratt and Fairclough Homes, have been created for ex-renters who have the income to pay a mortgage but haven't been able to save a deposit because of high rents. Contracts are exchanged when you move in and you are given up to 20 weeks to save for a 5 per cent deposit. Repayments are made to the developer at an agreed rate until the deposit is accrued and then the sale is completed and mortgage repayments start. The developer shifts his stock units and you get your flat.

New homes used to be like

There's never been a better time to buy – developers are showering buyers with incentives. Fiona Brandhorst examines the options.

new cars, their depreciation was immediate. But no longer. According to figures from the Halifax, the value of new homes rose 7.7 per cent last year, whereas existing property rose only 4.8 per cent.

But bear in mind that the sample of new homes is very small so the figures can show inconsistencies from year to year. Not much consolation if you bought new around 10 years ago and, having ridden the rollercoaster, are only now seeing your property appreciate. Which leads on to probably the most popular developer incentive – part exchanges, or PXs as they're known in the trade. Read the small print to see if you qualify.

Part exchanges are often available on selected sites only and almost always within a 30-mile radius of the new home. You'll need to be moving upmarket: the value of your present property must not exceed 60-70 per cent of the purchase price (this figure varies between developers).

Barratt arranges for an "independent professional" to value your property after you've paid your reservation fee and claims to make you a "fair" offer in seven days. The company is understandably keen to stress the difference between estate agents' asking prices and actual sale prices – in other words, you are likely to be offered less than you expect.

Berkeley Homes' offer is "a percentage of the average of at least two independent valuations by local estate agents." Fairview asks up to three agents to value your property based on an immediate sale. They are all different ways of saying that you won't be offered the full asking price. Jenny Stevens was offered £30,000 for her one-bed-

room flat in south London, for a quick 10-day sale in part-exchange for a brand new two-bedroom house nearby. She declined the offer and sold it with a local agent for £41,000 shortly after.

But developers are one step ahead. Countryside Residential is about to announce a three-tier system to buy one of their homes and is "committed to offering full value part-exchange", probably with extras thrown in if you buy off-plan several months before moving in. If you can't accept the offer made to you, most developers will honour your reservation and let you have a go at selling your house for a better price. If you're unsuccessful, the developer's original offer will still stand, usually up to six weeks prior to the house being completed.

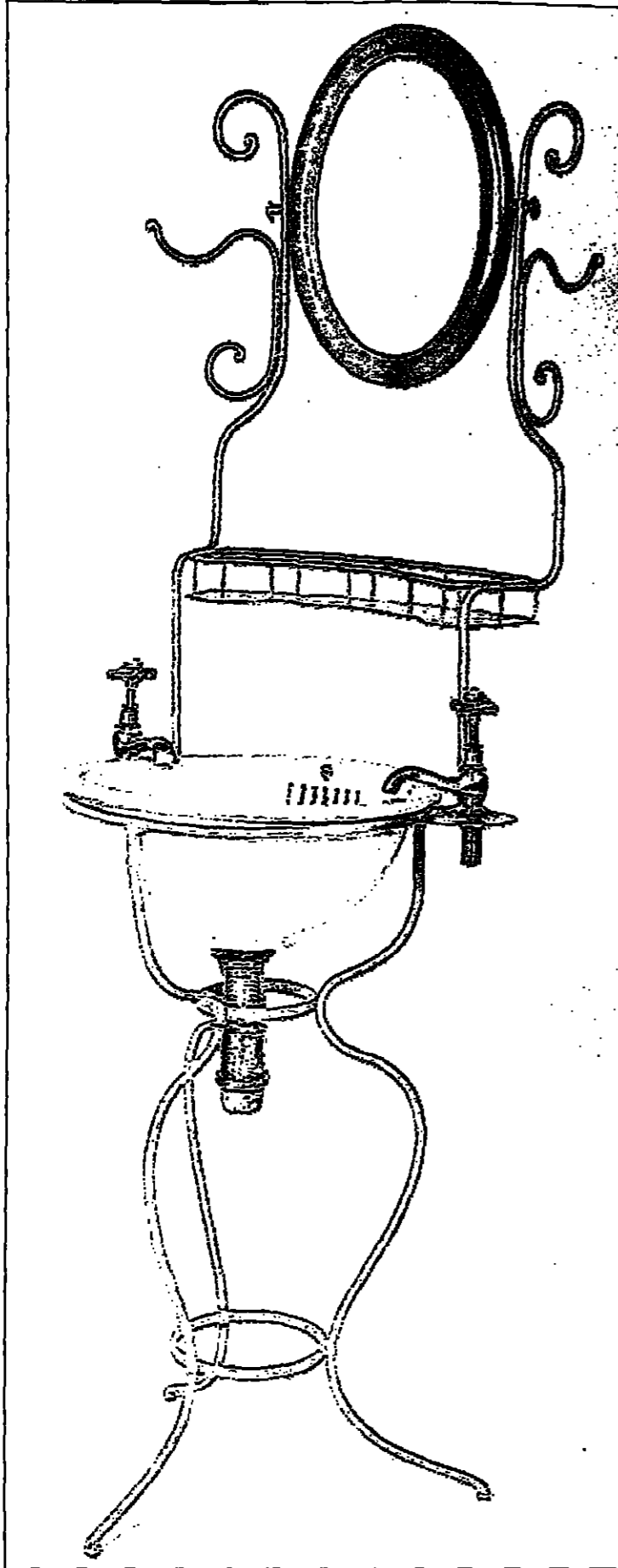
Some offer an agency selling service, saving you fees and the stress of handling the sale. Barratt has its own agency offering, while Redrow Homes is keen to promote its Mastermove scheme, where it instructs an agent to sell your home for a £50 registration fee (refundable if the sale falls through or credited against the price of the new home).

Some developers are operating like mini-estate agents from the site office, from where they mastermind on-site sales incentives – the chain-breaker. Carole McDowell, a site sales manager with Linden Homes, believes 75 per cent of purchasers are in a chain. She recently had a chain-breaker in place to facilitate the sale of a one-off house selling for £259,000 in Surrey. It involved buying the second house in the four-person chain. At the 11th hour the sale went through without Linden having to buy any property.

Barratt even has a sale and lease back scheme, where you can buy the show house and they will pay you a market rent for it until they have sold all the other properties on the site and you can move in. Incentives aside, it's good to know that there are still straightforward deals. Maggie Hunt bought the last two-bed flat in a block in Hillingdon, Middlesex, for £61,500 after a "builders' discount" of just over £10,000. A year later, Maggie's more than pleased to find it's now valued at almost £80,000. Now that's what I call a good deal.

# No more maroon; give me Victorian floral

The bathroom is the most popular room in the house, it seems. Rosalind Russell reports on bathtime chic old and new



French wrought-iron washstand with mirror and shelf, from Stiffkey Bathrooms, c. 1900, approx. £850

In the curious way statistics have of throwing up oddities, it was once reported by the Halifax that the highest proportion of customers desperate to change their bathrooms lived in the east of England.

It could be, of course, that the east also had the densest population of maroon, navy, green and turquoise bathroom suites. Hence the desire to sling them out, soonest.

A new bathroom has held its position in the top five of most popular home improvements for several years. And recently those who have splashed out have restrained themselves, colourwise, to white, or Old English white, except for the adventurous, who have gone for stainless steel.

Colour now is restricted to accessories, where you can be as riotous as you please. The bath towel company Christy has just launched its new range, including shades called Elephant, Mango, Turtle and Periwinkle (from £16 for a bath towel) which, although they may be a little exotic for some tastes, won't give your estate agent any sleepless nights when you decide to sell.

Among the most striking design in basins are those from CD (UK) Ltd - boring name, great product - which is using Corian surface material for its Avante range. The basins come in standard round or oval shapes but can be made in any of 63 colours, none of which resemble Whisper Peach. The Avante Concerto has a band of sun yellow and is set into a toughened glass top on a chrome stand. It costs from £608.65. Even more dramatic is the Avante Allegro, in scarlet, from £534, but Corian can be mixed with a variety of other materials including metal and glass, to create unusual finishes.

Ocean Home Shopping's spring range includes Italian-made stainless steel basins, in two sizes, which are perfect for anyone fitting out a loft-style property. The sink comes with a top in

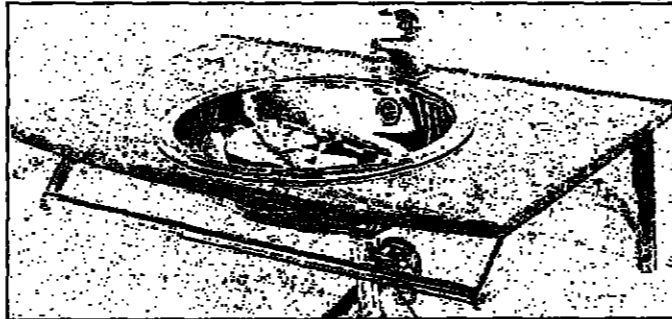


'Simplicitas' washdown closet by Doulton of Lambeth, c. 1900, prices from £500, from Stiffkey Bathrooms

cherry-wood or glass, waste pipes and cover plate, towel bar and wall mounting brackets; the mixer tap (£54) is not included in the price, which starts at £245. Accessories to match include an industrial-style steel laundry bin with cherry-wood lid (£165 for the corner model) and cast aluminium hook rack (£13.95) and matching robe hanger (£13.95). Neatest of all perhaps are the towel rail (£39.95) and toothbrush holder (£27.97) with aluminium wall fittings sleekly designed to look like a shark's head: clever, but not too joky.

A perfect match for an aluminium or steel bathroom would be Bisque's new Cobrathem radiator. It is made in Switzerland, and can be supplied in nine different sizes and in chrome, white or any of 1,600 other colours. It even has a ball finial at the top, to hang your dressing-gown on to warm. Prices are from £386.70.

Bisque's other new design is the



Ocean Home Shopping's Italian stainless steel basins with cherry-wood top, from £245

Jeeves radiator, which has a wooden rail attached - in oak, ash or maple - for warming clothes or towels. Prices start from £258.05 plus VAT. A pair of Art Deco-style chrome basin taps costs £44.99.

If you are still hankering after a traditional-style bathroom, then Hyde and Marc Brown recondition rare pieces of period sanitaryware at their converted Methodist chapel on the north Norfolk coast. Their company, Stiffkey Bathrooms, stocks a huge range of Victorian shower baths, floral loos and Georgian bath-racks.

A French wrought-iron wash-stand with mirror and shelf, made in 1900 and converted for use with taps, costs around £850. This is where to find the splendidly named Gladiolus Mulberry Chrysanthemum washdown closet (made by Porcher of Paris in 1888) and the Deluge, made by Twyford in 1880. A Simplicitas blue-patterned water closet by Doulton of Lambeth, made in 1900, costs from £500.

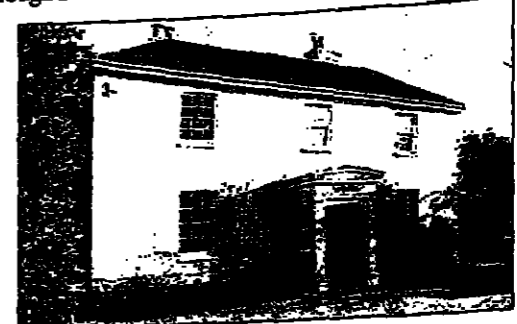
Those on a tighter budget should check out Homebase's bathroom accessory department in the bigger stores. A pair of Art Deco-style chrome basin taps costs £44.99.

Ocean Home Shopping ordering: 0171-501 2500, or website [www.oceancatalogue.co.uk](http://www.oceancatalogue.co.uk). CD (UK) Ltd: 0113 244 3337 or [www.cd-uk.co.uk](http://www.cd-uk.co.uk). Bisque: 0171-328 2224, or for nationwide stockists: 01225 469244. Stiffkey Bathrooms: 01328 830084.

## THREE TO VIEW: WITH GOOD BATHROOMS



Designed and built by architects on the site of an old forge in Crystal Palace, south-east London, this two-bedroom loft-style house has a central spiral staircase linking the three floors. The house has a main bedroom and dressing room, shower room, leading from main bedroom and dressing room, has recessed halogen lights, tiled, white Sicilian marble walls and Pave mono rubber flooring. The 33ft reception room has a part caved ceiling and a Juncos wooden floor. There are double doors between dining room and kitchen, where there is a butler's sink, a Smeg gas hob and oven, and a glass brick wall. There is off-street parking for two cars. The home is for sale for £325,000 through Friend & Falcke (0171-498 0736).



Northwood Farmhouse, on Hayling Island in Hampshire, is a restored Georgian four-bedroom house, approached via a no-through lane. The first bathroom is fitted with a Victorian Sanitan suite, and has a free-standing enamel bath with claw feet. The floor is wood strip; there is a heated towel rail, oak cupboards, a built-in hairdryer and marble surfaces. The other bathroom has a Jacuzzi, star lighting above, Amico flooring and a decorative ceiling. With three reception rooms, a conservatory and a 20ft kitchen, Northwood is for sale for £430,000 through John D Wood (01962 863131).



Raylands is an Elizabethan four-bedroom farmhouse eight miles from Chelmsford in Essex. Renovated and decorated, it has two bathrooms, both newly fitted with white Heritage suites. The main bathroom has a cast-iron, roll-top bath with an "antique" mixer tap and shower. The heavy timber-framed house also has three reception rooms and a 13ft kitchen, with an African slate floor, a butler's sink, and units built from old pine with granite work surfaces. There's another three-bedroom Sixties-built house in the grounds. All for sale at £795,000 through Trembath Welch (01371 872117).



PENNY JACKSON

## Remote control? No problem

It is pretty neat at any age to be able to operate the television, video security system, lighting and curtains all from one monitor. But for anyone getting on in age it could be a godsend.

At present, music, TV and lighting controllable from one switch tend to be available only at the top end of the market, where the buyer is likely to be young enough to get out of

the chair. A new company, Mullion (01285 657576), is to build homes with an automation system, as well as adapting older buildings.

The new homes, starting at £400,000, will include a flexible "smart room", which can be adapted for various uses. For older buyers there are extras such as audio induction loops for the hard of hearing, low-level

lighting and wide doorways.

When it comes to finding land or houses ripe for development, it's a tough world, but perhaps contacting someone recently bereaved to suggest they sell up is not the most sensitive of approaches. A reader from Finner in Middlesex was distressed to receive a letter from a property company suggesting

that since she was now the owner of the house, perhaps they could do business, and pointing out that they were happy to make cash transactions.

"My husband died a few months ago and I did feel upset when the letter arrived. Then I was angry that the information should be used in this way, and was concerned that some people might be

vulnerable at times like this," explains Mrs Abraham.

In fact, as she suspected, the probate register is a public record and anyone can trawl through it for information. Apparently wills provide a good source of unmodernised flats and houses. The best advice seems to be to ignore such letters, or, for those thinking of selling, to make sure your

property goes on to the market so that the company can compete along with everyone else.

It is becoming easier to complain about property matters. The latest to join the line of sympathetic ears is the Land Registry, which has set up an independent complaints reviewer to listen to anyone affected by the actions of the registry.

The price of a play cottage for children, featured in a recent article in these pages, was sent into orbit by the addition of an extra night. The Children's Cottage Company (0171-223 0876) produces thatched replicas for the garden from £1,600, not £16,000 - which will come as a relief for those who may have thought it would be wiser to save up for the real thing.

TEL: 0171 293 2222

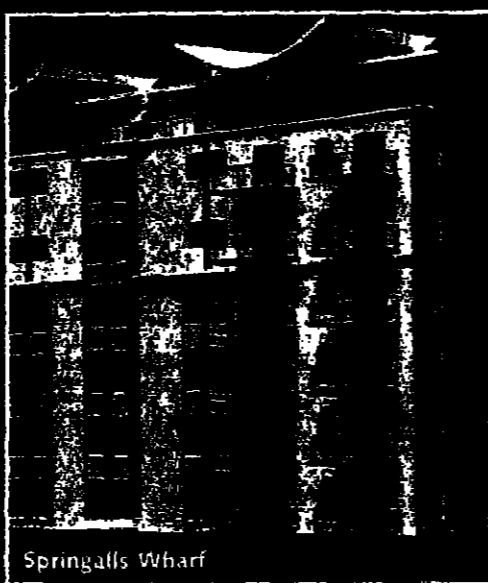
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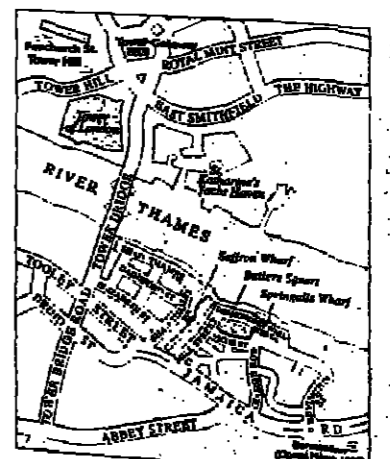
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